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Leaves for quiet hours

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LEAVES
FOR
QUIET HOURS.

BY

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PREFACE.

AT the request of the Editor of "The Christian World" I have embraced in a volume some of the short devotional pieces which from time to time I have been contributing to that paper. I have been induced to do so by the fact that so many have found them helpful and have made me aware of the benefit they have received. A few minutes will suffice to read any one of these. Each consists of two parts. The first is the suggestion of a thought; the second is the expression of a feeling — either in the form of a

prayer or of an invocation. But I hope that these two parts will never be divided in holy wedlock—that every fresh thought will be tinged with the heart's emotion, and that every emotion of the heart will be winged by the inspiration of a thought. A devotional book is believed to be a very simple thing. It ought to be the most difficult composition in the world, for it should aim at the marriage of qualities which are commonly supposed to be antagonistic—the insight of the thinker and the fervour of the worshipper. My own conviction has increasingly been that the hours of our deepest devotion are precisely in those moments when we catch fresh glimpses of hidden things.

G. M.

EDINBURGH, 1904.

LEAVES FOR QUIET HOURS

THE MAIN USE OF THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”—EPHESIANS VI. 13.

WHAT a strange conclusion to so martial a war-cry! The soldier is generally told to put on his armour for the sake of the battle; here it is for the sake of the camp. To the common view the arduous thing in a Christian's life is the hour of conflict; to Paul it is the hour after conflict. If you or I had written this verse we should have put it thus: “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand awaiting the foe, and finally to withstand when the foe has come.” But Paul reverses the process. To him the withstanding is the less difficult of the two.

The greatest danger he sees for the Christian soldier is just at the point where he has "done all." And is not Paul right in his perception! Is not the arduous bit of a Christian's life rather the camp than the field! When a man feels he is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, it is comparatively easy to lay aside every weight. But when there is no outward battle, no visible foe, no possible wreath for the victor, when the field is his own heart and the enemy his own wish and the spectator his own conscience, when there is no human voice to cry "Well done!" and no public opinion to say "He has fought a good fight!"—that is the time when he needs the Christian armour.

Lord, arm me for the silence! Often in my hour of trial I am brave when duty has to be done and weak when it is over. In the first fire of my bereavement I have to rise up from before my dead. There are letters to be written; there are sad offices to be performed; there are friends to be bidden to the funeral. And I go through them calmly; I feel as if something supported me; men say, "How bravely he bears it!" But when the

letters are finished, and the funeral over, and the friends gone, then comes the misery, the despair. Save me, O Lord! save me from my own companionship! Protect me from the solitude of my heart; arm me against myself! I have been strong in the hour of outward battle because I heard the voices of human sympathy; let me hear the voice of a greater sympathy for the watch of night! I was able to withstand in the day because there was work to be done; help me in the shadows when no man can work! Teach me that the heart has a duty greater than the hand! Teach me that I am not a perfect soldier when I can only fight! Teach me that the courage which can endure is nobler than the courage which can strike! Teach me the heroism of Gethsemane, where Thou hadst finished the work that was given Thee to do and hadst only the weight that was given Thee to bear! Thou hast girded me with the sword for the tumult; clothe me with the breastplate for the silence! My armour shall only be complete when I have done all and still shall stand.

SINCERITY.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”—
EPHESIANS VI. 14.

IN arming the Christian soldier Paul puts sincerity before everything. His first question is not, How much do you believe? but, How much do you believe it? He is less concerned with the article, than with the ardour, of my faith; he is content it should be half-formed, if it be whole-hearted. To be girt with truth is to be pervaded by sincerity. Sincerity is just whole-heartedness. It means, literally, without wax. You have seen figures put together with wax—artificially put together. At first sight they seem entire, uniform, all of a piece; you may look at them long without detecting the imposture. If you want to detect it at once, you must apply heat to them; the fire

will try every man's work, of what sort it is. Put heat to your wax figure, and it will go to pieces in a moment. The fire will not so much destroy it as destroy its deception; it will send it back to its original elements—ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The fire of God does not destroy; it restores things to their normal state. The wax figure is the real destroyer. It breaks the harmony of nature; it takes things out of their place; it joins together what God has put asunder. And the fire breaks the false union. It annuls the marriage between a saintly aspect and a selfish soul. It forbids the banns between rest and recklessness. It burns the gorgeous raiment of the despairing heart, and tells it that it is despairing. It withers the leaves of the figtree which deceive by false promise of maturity; it separates the beauty and the barrenness that have made their home together.

My soul, art thou sincere? I do not ask if thou art consistent. I have seen the sun upon the mountains while the valleys were still in shade; but I did not call the valleys insincere. I have heard music on the waters when the

land was in silence; yet I did not, therefore, say that the land was untrue. I have seen the primrose lift its head when there was no flower to greet it; yet I did not on that account deem it a hypocrite. But is it a painted primrose, an artificial primrose? I can reverence any flower of the heart, however lowly. I can reverence the first bud of its spring, for it tells of the Christ that is to be. I can reverence the last rose of its summer, for it tells of the Christ that has been here, and, therefore, is not far away. But I cannot reverence the manufactured flower, the paper flower, the waxen flower. I cannot reverence the imitation of the structure when the spirit is not there. The time of figs may not be yet; and there is no blame. But do not paint the fruit before the time! Do not deceive the thirsty traveller by a dream! Do not pretend that thou hast to-day what waits till to-morrow! Do not seek to shine with more light than is in thee! Thy light may be only a dawn, but God's dawn is better than man's gilding; be true to thyself, O my soul!

THE CONSECRATION OF THE NATURAL.

“Let the earth bring forth grass . . . whose seed is in itself upon the earth.”—GENESIS I. 11.

WHAT is the difference between this day of creation and the previous days? It is that for the first time there is a consecration of self-help. Hitherto, all help had come from above—from the light and the firmament. Here the earth itself is to be the agent. Everything is to be “after its kind;” everything is to have “the seed in itself.” What is meant is that for the future the natural shall be counted Divine. It is a lesson which we all need to learn. We often reject the providence of a thing because we say we can explain it. “Oh,” we cry, “it all happened quite naturally!” Why should a thing

be un-Divine because I can explain it! The mystery is not how it comes, but what comes out of it. The marriage of Rebecca and Isaac was quite natural; it was, humanly speaking, accidental—the result of an act of passing courtesy; but the house of Israel came from it. The meeting of Ruth with Boaz was quite natural—it came in the way of business; but it was the human origin of Jesus.

My soul, believe in the consecration of the natural! Uncover your head in the temple of the commonplace! Bow down to the harmony God weaves out of trivial things! You meant to visit a house on Tuesday, but some impulse made you go on Monday. Reverence that impulse! You met one that day who became your life-friend. In a throb of human pity you took in a blind man from a thunderstorm. Reverence that human pity!—the man you preserved was Paul. You took the road to Emmaus from a motive you could not define. Reverence that undefined motive!—you met on that road the man that made your heart burn—Jesus. It is with thee, my soul, as with the bee; it flies from flower to flower for its own ends, but all the

time it is making a hive. Even such is thy work below. Thou art pursuing thy pleasures, sometimes without a thought of God. Thou art flying from flower to flower in search of idle vanities ; thou art building for a day and for the dust. But thou art doing what thou knowest not. Thou art rearing a mansion for the skies. Thou art making a tabernacle for the mount. Thou art constructing a tower whose top shalt reach to heaven ; and one day thou thyself shalt wonder at thine unconscious workmanship. Thou hast designed to build a row of cottages, and there has emerged the City of God. Thou hast sown thine own seed ; but it has issued in God's tree.

THE REVELATION OF INWARD RESOURCES.

“Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.”—GENESIS I. 9.

“LET the dry land *appear*” ! It was already there, though invisible ; it only wanted to be revealed. It is a true picture of most of us. Much of the Spirit’s creating work is just the bringing out of latent qualities. There are many among us we deem to be all sea, and who yet conceal within them the elements of solid land. How many a frivolous girl makes a devoted wife and mother ! You don’t imagine the frivolity has caused it. No ; the frivolity has only covered it. It has been sleeping below all the time, waiting for the dawn to wake it. And what is it that makes the dry land appear ? It is not so much the

giving of something new as the removal of something old. It is the taking away of an obstruction—"let the waters be gathered unto one place." It is not the want of sight that prevents me from seeing my possibilities; it is something between me and the sun; it is the shadow of myself. If I could only get rid of self-contemplation, there would be revealed within me latent heaps of gold.

Remove my shadow, O my God! Release the imprisoned land that lies within my heart! Give me the power to see what is actually before me! How many things I see for the first time when the obstruction is withdrawn! I went up to the mount in the morning with a heavy heart. I thought there was no escape from the sacrifice of my Isaac. By-and-by I found that the sacrifice was not required; and then I saw what I had never seen before—a ram caught in a thicket. There was a substitute for my sacrifice. It was there all along. It was put there by Thee, even before I cried to Thee. But, until I had Thy answer, I did not see it; the shadow of my fear hid it. I went out into the desert and found no water. I uttered a cry of despair, and there came from Thee a

prophecy of hope. And hope let me see what I never saw before—that in this desert there had always been a well of water waiting for me. Even so, my Father, in my seasons of despair lift all my shadows! Clear away the mist from the top of Mount Moriah; disperse the darkness from the bosom of the desert! Give me faith to be healed—faith to lift from the threshold the shadow that dims! Let the waters of my past trouble be gathered from my soul; let the stone of my old sepulchre be rolled from the door! And from the hollow place within there shall rise a buried Christ, and in the scene of waves and graves redemption shall appear.

THE BENEFIT OF GRATITUDE.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."—PSALM XCII. I.

HE means, it is a good thing for *us*—it is a benefit to the mind. It prevents some great diseases. Let us take but one—the remorse of memory. Do you know what that is? It is something very different from the remorse of conscience. The remorse of conscience is the pain of having done wrong; but the remorse of memory is the pain of having failed to enjoy yourself. Have you ever felt that? Have you ever come to a time in which you looked back upon the past, and learned how little you had valued it? I know few moments so sore as that. To find that days were happy when the days are gone, to learn that I was passing through Elysium

and I did not know it, to see the light on the hill only when it is setting—that is one of the saddest of all experiences to me, to you. It is the climax of pain when I must say with the poetess,

“Oh, while my brother with me played,
Would I had loved him more !”

My soul, wouldst thou be free from that pain—that remorse of memory ? Thou mayst be so ; live in present thanksgiving ! Count thy sunbeams *now* ! Treasure to-day the gems that are strewn upon thy path ! The love that is merely retrospective is a very painful thing. I would not have thee wake to the glory of a past only when it is past—desire one of the days of the Son of Man after He has ascended. If thy days of sorrow at any time should cloud thy days of joy, I should like thee to be able to say, “Well, while they lasted, I did appreciate them.” There are some who want to feel at death that their life has been a vain show. I would not have it so with thee, O my soul. I should like, when death comes, to feel that I had thoroughly enjoyed life—taken the honey from the flower as God meant me to take it.

I should like to know that I had not defrauded myself of my birthright, that I made room for others because I had had my share. It will be a great solace to me at twilight that I have basked with conscious joy in the heat of the day. Therefore I shall bask in it now. The cup of gladness which my Father has given me shall I not drink it, even unto the dregs! I shall thank Him for every bird that sings. I shall praise Him for every flower that blows. I shall bless Him for every stream that warbles. I shall love Him for every heart that loves. I shall see the sparkling of the cup ere it passes to the hand of my brother. There shall be no remorse of memory when I have thanked God for to-day.

THE ROAD TO SALVATION.

“Who then can be saved? . . . With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”—
MARK X, 26, 27.

AND so we are nearer to salvation in the hands of God than in the hands of man! I used to think the reverse. I used to think that the awful thing about the judgment-seat was the sinless character of the Judge. Our Lord knew better. He told men to be thankful that the throne of judgment was white. He said that worldly people would have no chance if they were brought before a worldly tribunal. Man cannot see the possibilities of man. He beholds the flood, but not the rainbow. God alone can see the rainbow in my flood. My brother shuts the door of his heart early. Whenever it begins to be dusk, he closes the gates of his pity. But my

Father keeps His gates open till midnight on the chance of the prodigal's return. He is ever calling through the darkness, "Watchman, what of the night?" He is ever listening in the shadows for the tread of my returning footsteps. He is ever stretching a hand through time "to catch the far-off interest of tears." He can hear my faintest murmur of unrest. He can catch my softest sigh of penitence. He can feel the smallest throb of my heart. He can detect the lowest breathing of my spirit. For my brother it would be impossible to hear anything, to feel anything, to hope anything. He would look at me and say that I was dead; my Father would say, "Behold, he prayeth!"

O Thou on whose white apparel no stain has ever fallen, I come to Thee. I stand before Thy judgment throne in preference to the judgment throne of man. I seek it because it is white; it is its spotlessness that makes me hope. I pass by all other thrones but Thine. I pass the martyrs and apostles. I pass the angel and the archangel. I pass the cherub and seraph. I pause not in my flight till I reach the blaze of Thy

purity; and on the steps of Thy altar I lay my burden down. Only *Thou* art worthy to open the book of my life. Seal it from all others, O my Father! Let it not be read in any light but Thine! Unto Thee I lift up my soul. I make my appeal from Felix unto Cæsar; unto Cæsar shall I go. In the light of Thy morning alone let the blots of my record be seen! Unto whom shall I go but unto Thee! My brother is an alarmist; he has not the words of Everlasting Life; he deems it impossible I should recover. But with Thee there is hope even in the grave; to the Great Physician all things are possible.

THE ROOT OF SYMPATHY.

“For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”—JAMES I. 23, 24.

I UNDERSTAND St. James to be speaking of the life of ministrant charity. Remember his definition of pure religion!—to visit the fatherless in their affliction. He says that what prevents a man from doing this is the forgetfulness of his own yesterday. He forgets what his own face was like before it was beautified. If he could keep in his eye the first vision of himself in the glass, he would be greatly more sympathetic to the wants of his brother. And is not James right in his view! I believe that the root of all sympathy is retrospect—the memory of our own deliverance. I do not think that the actual time of

sorrow tends to make us sympathetic. No man can behold his natural face while it is natural; he can only see it as a memory. But if I forget what I was, if I remember not the mirror of my own past meanness, I have lost the chord of my own compassion. It is worse to veil yesterday than to veil to-morrow. There are men who veil to-morrow, and it is sad; they have no golden dream to cheer their day. But to veil yesterday is to break the only glass that shows me my brother's cross, to shatter the only mirror that reveals my sister's pain.

Keep thy mirror, O my soul! It is the most precious bit of furniture in all thy house—the last thing that thou shouldst part with. It reminds thee of poorer days, but that is its glory. It is that which gives thee a heart for the poor. Thy gorgeous furniture may make thee glad, but it will not make another glad. How shalt thou read thy brother's pain except on the former leaf of thine own book—the leaf which thou hast turned! Paul says that we behold in a glass the glory of the Lord. What glass? The same which James saw—the glass of yesterday. The glory of

the Lord is Calvary, and the road to Calvary is sympathy, and the road to sympathy is yesterday. Thou must go back if thou wouldst lift thy brother's load. Back, then, O my soul! Back to the record of thine own humility! Back to the memory of thy moth and rust! Back to the sight of the ground out of which thou wert taken! Back to the vision of thy rags in the mirror of the past! The memory of thy rags shall be thy robe of righteousness, for he who redeems his brother is he who forgets not the shadow of his own morning.

THE INFLUENCE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH.

“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”—PSALM XCII. 13.

PLANTING is opposed to *grafting*. This is a defence of early religious training. The Psalmist says that those who from the outset have been reared in the light of God get a great advantage in after years. But what is the advantage? What does he mean by saying, “If they are planted in God’s house, they shall flourish in God’s courts”? It is commonly thought to mean that those who get in will get further in. I think it is quite the reverse. Those who get in will get further out. The courts are outside the house—nearer the world than the house. What is meant is that the unworldly man

shall have more worldly power, that he who seeks first God and His righteousness shall have temporal strength added to him. And is not that true! Do not we see it every day! Is not the training for God the beginning of earthly wisdom! Are not the powers of mind that fit us for heaven precisely the powers that fit us for earth! Is not the merchant helped by a calm judgment! Is not the master aided by a strong will! Is not the poet stimulated by a great, yea, by an impossible ideal! Is not the work of each day helped by the vision of to-morrow! Truly the outer courts of God are possessed by him who has entered in!

O Thou Eternal One, I need Thee for *time*. They are always telling me that earth is the robing room in which to prepare for heaven. Rather hast Thou said that heaven is the robing room in which to prepare for earth. It is from within Thy sanctuary that I am armed for the battle of life; it is in meeting my God that I learn to meet my brother. I am not fit for this world till I have seen the other world; I must go up to the mount ere I give laws to the people. It is from behind

the veil of eternity that I speak to the things of time. I could not bear the fretting of the shore were it not for the sight of the sea. I could not stand the murmur of the crowd were it not for the murmur of the shell. I should sink beneath the burden and the heat of the day unless I were refreshed by the spray from the ocean of Thy love. Roll in, then, thou great sea! Roll in upon the hot sands of time, and lave the thirsty land! Roll in upon the beach, and wash its impurities away! Let us hear the sound of Thy waves, and we shall bear the rumbling of earth's chariot wheels! He who has lain one moment on Thy breast is fit to tread the dusty courts of time.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOLITUDE.

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ;
and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”—
ISAIAH XXXV. I.

THAT was a new experience for the men of the old world. For them the only gladness was to live in company. There was no life but social life. The individual man was afraid to be alone. He was afraid of Jacob's angel ; he feared to wrestle with his own conscience ; he dreaded the spectre of the past ; he shrank from the memory of his yesterday ; he trembled to meet Esau. And when he was forced to go into the wilderness, it was awful to him. When sickness laid him aside he became despairing. He often refused to wait for the natural course of death—he ran to meet it ; he could not bear a solitary burden ; he could bear a burden along with multitudes—

in the camp or in the field. But, when the multitude was gone, when the brethren had departed, when the night came and he was left alone, then indeed he cried aloud.

Lord, Thou hast lighted Thy candle in the silent room. Thou hast made it possible for me to sit alone beneath the stars without saying, "How dreadful is this place!" Thou hast reconciled me to myself—to my own company; nay, rather, Thou hast reconciled me to Thine. It was fear to meet *Thee* made me dread to be alone. But now Thou hast lifted the veil, and lo! the wrestling angel is a man! I thought Thee foreign to my soul, and lo! Thy name is Love! I thought the curtains of my sick-bed were a cloud upon Thy brow, and lo! they are the drapery of a ladder that ascends to Thy smile! I thought the pain of the shrunk sinew was a sign of Thine anger, and lo! it is a fetter to keep me in Thy love! Thou hast blest me in my solitude. I halted one day upon my thigh. I could not run with the crowd; I could not keep up with the multitude. I lagged behind; I missed my chance in the race; I was left alone. I was sad; I was sore at heart;

I murmured. But I was wrong. That hour of loneliness has been my most crowded hour. It has been crowded with Thy blessings; it has been loaded with Thy benefits; it has been redolent with Thy flowers. Thy flowers have sprung up in the night. Their perfume has been wafted through the desert. Their soil has been the place of the old garbage, where all useless things once were thrown. Its name is Gethsemane. It looks a cheerless spot, and the multitude pass by it. But those who enter it shall hear the sound of singing, and those who abide in it shall wear the red blossom of sacrifice.

THE MEDICAL ASPECT OF RELIGION.

“Who is the health of my countenance.”—PSALM XLIII. 5.

WHY the health of the *countenance*? Why does he not say “the health of my spirit”? Because to the psalmist the redemption of the soul always ends in the resurrection of the body. And is not the psalmist right! Don’t we also find it true, you and I! They tell us that bad health affects the spirits, and doubtless it is so. But is it not equally true that to be in low spirits affects the health! Do we not find that physical trouble is more easily shaken off when there is peace within! I have often heard it said that children stand trouble better than adults. I believe it to be the fact, but I think the reason is a deeper one than is commonly supposed. It is not

because the child is fresher than the man, it is because the child has less care than the man. The mind is a factor in the recovery of the body. I am not sure that I would even except cases of unconsciousness. Our sleep is coloured by our waking, and in the state which men call unconscious I know not what dreams may lie. Job said, "In my flesh I shall see God;" he might have equally said, "In God I shall see my flesh." Get the soul and you will get the body too. Get peace and you will lessen pain. Get faith and you will diminish fever. Get wisdom and you will strengthen weakness. Get love and you will dispel lassitude. The hope in God is the health of the countenance.

O Thou, who didst put a little child in the midst of the disciples, I understand what that means to-day. I understand how modern was the act, how suited to the world in which I dwell. I have heard men say it was to disparage outward strength. Nay, my Lord, it was to make me outwardly more strong. It is because a child's heart gives a man's health that Thou hast bidden me become a child. It is because there is no armour

against disease like the self-forgetting soul, that Thou hast sent me back to the days of lightest care. It is not because I loathe worldly comfort, but because I love it, that I come to Thee. I want to be free from low spirits; they hurt me; they open the pores to all diseases; they make me liable to draughts and colds. I blamed exposure yesterday for a chill. It was the want of it; I was too closely shut in, too much confined within my own cares. Unbar the doors, O Lord! Open my heart to Thy breath, and my body shall be closed to the pestilence. Let in Thy atmosphere of joy, and all contagious vapours shall be kept out. Make me sound within, and the outer man shall be renewed day by day. Make me to hear the voice of gladness, and the very bones which have been broken shall rejoice. If my heart be glad, my flesh also shall rest in hope. If I take up my cross, I shall take up my bed as well. Let Thy way be known on earth, and Thy saving health shall be found in all nations.

LOVE'S DOMINION.

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”—GENESIS I. 26.

THE image of God is love, and love is the most ambitious thing in the world. Wherever it rises, it claims universal dominion. There are four things over which love claims dominion. The first is “the fish of the sea”—the little nibbles on the waters of life. Does that seem a small claim? It is a tremendous one. It requires more love to stand worry than to stand grief. The second is “the fowl of the air”—the restless thoughts of the heart. Love can arrest unrest. It can remain unmoved amid the flight of old forms of faith; it can recognise the one presence

beneath the constant change of apparel. The third is "the cattle"—the earthly or animal nature. Love can overcome that. How many a young man has it made pure! How many a sensuous soul has it refined and beautified! Love has done more than law to lift the heart above the mire. The fourth is the thing that "creepeth upon the earth"—the moments of human insignificance in which it seems presumptuous in man to hope. There are seasons in which I ask myself, What is my petty life amid the vastness of the stars! But love makes me stand erect. It gives me a sense of immortality, of imperishableness. It lifts me above all material things, however magnificent. It tells me there is room in the inn amid the guests of my Father. It carries me up from the manger of my own humiliation. It makes me say, "What a piece of work is man!"

"Strong Son of God, Immortal Love," give me the dominion over these four! Give me the dominion over the fish of the sea—the power to do Martha's service with Mary's unencumberedness! Give me the dominion over the fowl of the air—the power to meet

Peter's shipwreck with John's quiet rest! Give me the dominion over the beast of the field—the power to wash the leper's spots with Magdalene's tears! Give me the dominion over the creeping thing—the thing which makes me crouch, called Death! It is the last enemy which shall be left Thee to conquer. Reveal Thyself, O Love, in the valley! Reveal the immortality of Thy youth in the midst of decay! Reveal Thy spring-time in the winter, Thy Nebo in the desert, Thy singing on the leafless tree! Reveal that there is something which passes not away when tongues shall cease and prophets fail! Reveal that Thou art seen face to face when other things appear through a glass darkly! Then shall I walk, not creep, through the valley of the shadow of death; in the vision of Thy crown I shall crouch no more.

THE SICK-ROOM OF HUMANITY.

“Could ye not watch with me one hour?”—MATTHEW
XXVI. 40.

IT is one of the surprises of Jesus; He marvels at man's inhumanity to man. I take the idea to be what would be represented in our day by one nurse asking the co-operation of another. I do not think Christ regards Himself as the patient. The patient is humanity. Christ is watching by the bed of humanity; He is the head nurse in the great Hospital of Time. He asks the disciples to share in His watching. It is rather sympathy with His cause He desires than pity for Himself. It is not because He is personally weary that He asks their co-operation; it is because the patient is sick. He wants them to have a share in the duty, because the duty

is in His sight a privilege. It is to Him a miracle that man does not feel the privilege. There is no violation of law so miraculous to Him as the violation of human sympathy. The miracle in our world is a man walking on the sea. The miracle in His world is a man *not* walking on the sea, not in sympathy with the sorrows of his kind. What He asks is in the meantime simple sympathy, nothing but watching. There are times in the sick-room when we can do nothing but watch the patient. So was it with the Son of man in the hour of His flesh. His heart was broken by the torrent He could not stem. He could only pace the wards, and feel the pulse of the sufferer, and ask, with breathless interest, "Watchman, what of the night?"

There was none to answer Thy question, O Lord. There was no fellow watcher to give the response. The guardians of the sick had fallen asleep; Thou wert treading the hospital alone. Am I not responsible for Thy loneliness! I was put to watch beside Thee, and I fell asleep. If the spirit had been more willing, the flesh would have been less weak. I had not love enough to keep

awake, not interest enough to conquer drowsiness. Revive my love, revive my interest, O Christ! Give me the sense of relationship to the patient, *Thy* sense of relationship. Let me feel that he is a member of my body as he is of Thine! It is the sense of being a hireling that makes me sleep; I am paid for so many hours, and I want to get them through. Give me that thing which no hire can satisfy—love! Give me that which sleeps not when its object is in peril! Give me that which makes the night even as the day in time of trouble! Give me that which all the flowers of the garden cannot tempt me to forget! Give me that which could impel even Thee to be emptied of Thy majesty and take a servant's form! So shall I sleep not in the crisis hour; so in the wards of trouble shall I watch with Thee.

DAWN AT DUSK.

“I will give him the morning star.”—REVELATION II. 28.

TO whom is this promise given? Is it to youth? Nobody would wonder at that; youth is the time of promise. But this is a promise to the old. It is made to those who have finished their labour, as we see from verse 26, “he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end.” It is the man at the end of the day who is promised the morning star. And that is a very strange thing. We often speak of a promising boy or a promising young man. But how incongruous would it sound to hear one speak of a promising old man! It would seem like viewing the sunset and saying, “What a beautiful dawn!” Yet it is this and nothing less than this that is imaged here. The veteran who has reached

the goal is promised a dawn. We could have understood how he should have been promised a golden sunset. We could have understood how there should have been accorded to him the joy of looking back upon his work and seeing that it was all very good; but to get the morning star at evening time, to hear the lark in the place where the nightingale should be, to listen in December to the voices of the spring—it is the boon of perfect glory.

And yet, my soul, why should it not be thine—thine at the last! I know it has always been thine at the first; thine outgoing has been ever on the wings of the morning. But why shouldst thou not come back on the wings of the morning, too! When thou returnest from thy labour in the evening, why should there be for thee no morning star! Is it not through the hours of night that the earth itself rolls into its morning! Is there any hope like retrospective hope—the hope that is born of memory! There is none, O my soul! Wouldst thou look confidently forward; then must thou look steadily back. Is it not written, “He that spared not His own Son shall freely give us

all things." Thy hope for to-morrow is yesterday. Nothing in the future can be done for thee greater than what has been done. Wouldst thou fan thine expectations of a coming day; I know not where thou canst kindle them so well as at the fire of the day which is gone. The wings on which thou soarest are not made of fancies, but of experiences. It is on the steps of vanquished Calvary that thou mountest the heights of Olivet. It was after the flood that the rainbow was seen. I never really hope in God till I have passed through the waters. It is across the snow that the bells of happiest prospect ring. It is through the rent shadow that I see nearest the promised land; he that *overcometh* shall receive the morning star.

THE CONFESSION OF MEMORY.

"I have been young and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."—PSALM XXXVII. 25.

WHO is the "I" that speaks with such confidence? Nobody knows. It is someone unseen by history—below the level of fame. Perhaps it was a poor seamstress in a garret ; perhaps it was an invalid upon the couch of pain ; perhaps it was a breaker of stones by the roadside. Whoever it was he has become immortal. Doubtless, when he wrote he had not thought of being heard beyond the next street ; it reads very like a letter of condolence to a distressed neighbour. But the angels caught it up, and therefore the press caught it up. It became a song for all nights. No wonder. It has a note of quite special

music. Many have uttered songs of faith, but this is not a song of faith, it is a song of retrospect; it is the retrospect of an obscure man, a nobody, and that is its value. It claims no authority but experience; it appeals to no testimony but fact, not even God's testimony. It quotes neither Moses nor the prophets; it just gives an autobiography without a date and without a name.

My brothers, why have we so few autobiographies of the common plain! We have societies for collecting strange testimonies. We gather the record of apparitions. We invite the narration of fulfilled dreams. We solicit the disclosure of foretold events. Why do we not ask common men to give their experience of every-day life! We have our confessions of faith; why have we not our confessions of memory! You ask me to sign my belief in a plan of salvation. Perhaps I may demur to do so; the universe may be too big for me to see it round and round. But I shall not refuse to sign the confession of my own memory; I shall not refuse to say, "I have always found God good to *me*." There are few of us, even the most forlorn, who

would not rather live than die. That itself is a confession of memory—the confession that God is good. Be this our bond of creed, my brothers; we shall leave the rest to hope, but we shall put our sign to memory. Hope may flicker, for an hour it may even expire; but memory is stereotyped; it is a fact; it is a monument; it is unaffected by clouds; it is independent of night or day. I may lose the star of to-morrow, but not the green patch of yesterday. No progress can wash away that record of the past, “I have not seen the righteous forsaken.”

THE SOUL'S REST.

“Ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—MATTHEW XI. 29.

THE rest of a soul is a very peculiar thing; it is what *we* should call *movement*. The rest of a body is sleep, because its work becomes a weariness. The rest of a rolling ball is stillness, because it loses its energy as it goes. But the rest of a soul is motion, because repose is foreign to it. One of our poets has said, “The soul is dead that slumbers;” and it is true. The weariest moment of a soul is its torpor. When it has nothing to think of, nothing to dream of, nothing to speak of—when all its wells are dry, and all its flowers are withered, and all its ambitions are silent—when it feels that life is beneath striving for—when it says, “The game is not worth the candle”—that is an awful time! It is the spectacle of a restless soul, because it is

the sight of a soul reposing. It is the broken wing of a bird, the lame feet of a stag, the snapped string of a violin, the lost voice of a singer. The soul imprisoned within itself finds the yoke not easy.

My soul, how shalt thou find rest? On the wings of love. It is not less but more movement that thou cravest. Not a couch more downy, but a pinion more drastic, is wanted to give thee rest. If thou wouldst not be weary, thou must mount up with wings as eagles. Only when thou art flying art thou unfettered. Put on thy new wings, O my soul; put on thy wings of love, and soar! Soar to the joy of thy heart—the man Christ Jesus! Soar to the light of thy waking, the object of thy dreams! Soar, though thou come not up with Him to-day, nor to-morrow, nor, perhaps, for many morrows! Soar, though the wind be high, though the mist be thick upon the hills! If thou shalt only rise far enough, the mist will vanish, and the winds will cease, and in all thine onward way there shall be no more resistance to thy flight. Thou shalt reach thy perfect rest when thou hast attained thine unimpeded flying.

THE SUBSTITUTE FOR REVELATION.

“Who giveth songs in the night.”—JOB xxxv. 10.

THERE are times in which the heart has to fill the place of the eye. We see nothing; the sky is dark; yet we are not dismayed. There is no ray of light upon our path that we can discern, no opening in the cloud, no rent in the gloom. Yet somehow the heart sings—sings in the shadow, sings in the silence. And at these times we are to take the song as the substitute for the sun. We are to impute to the heart's singing all that is wanting to the eye's vision. The song is itself to be our revelation. “If it were not so I would have told you,” says the Lord—would not have suffered you to sing. The heart's joy demands a contradiction if it be not true. If

my soul says "Yea" and God does not say "Nay," the "Yea" is to prevail. The silence of God is vocal. If hope cries, and He answers not, hope's cry is to be itself the answer, for He has sent me a wing instead of a star; He has given me a song in the night.

My soul, be not so anxious about the reason of thy peace! Is it not written that there is a peace which passeth understanding. What is that but a song in the night! It is one of the songs without words. It gives no explanation of its music. Clouds and darkness may be round about thee, and yet thou mayest be able to sing. Do not distress thyself to find a cause for thy joy! Hast thou not read of a bush that was all in flame and yet was not consumed! The facts were all against its permanence; it was unreasonable that it should live. But it did live; and why? Because there was a voice speaking within it, singing within it—against facts, spite of reason, in defiance of circumstances. It was a song without words, a comfort without cause, a strength without the legions of angels. So, oftentimes, shall it be with thee.

There shall be moments in which Thy Gethsemane shall reveal no flower, in which the cup shall not pass, in which the legions of angels shall not come ; and yet, strange to say, thou shalt be strong. Thou shalt fly without pinions ; thou shalt walk without feet ; thou shalt breathe without air ; thou shalt praise without words ; thou shalt laugh without sunshine ; thou shalt bless without knowing why—for the song of thy heart shall itself be thy light, and thy joy shall be only from God.

THE HIDDEN THORN.

“And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.”—
MARK VI. 32.

IF you have a desert place in your heart to which you must sometimes go, you should depart to it in a “ship privately.” No man should make a thoroughfare of his desert. Keep your grief for the private ship. Never go into company with an abstracted mind; that is to display your desert. You have sometimes refrained from God’s table of communion because your thoughts were away. You did well. Man’s table of communion has the same need. If you are bidden to a feast when you are troubled in your mind, try first whether you can carry your burden privately away. If you can, then leave the

desert behind you, "anoint thy head and wash thy face that thou appear not unto men to fast." But if you cannot, if there is no ship that can take away your burden in secret, then come not yet to the feast. Journey not while the cloud is resting over the tabernacle. Tarry under the cloud. Watch one hour in the garden. Bury thy sorrow in the silence. Let thy heart be reconciled to thy Father, and then come to the world and offer thy gift.

O Thou that hast hid Thy thorn beneath a rose, steer the ship in which I conceal my burden! Thou hast gone to the feast of Cana from the fast in the wilderness; where hast Thou hid the print of the nails? In love. Steer me to that burying-ground! Let the ship, on its way to my desert, touch for an hour at the desert of my brother! Let me feel the fellowship of grief, the community of sorrow, the kindredness of pain! Let me hear the voices from other wildernesses, the sighs from other souls, the groans from other graves! And, when I come to my own landing-place and put down my hand to

lift up my burden, I shall meet a wondrous surprise. It will be there, but it will be there half-sized. Its heaviness will be gone, its impossibility will have vanished. I shall lift it easily; I shall carry it lightly; I shall bury it swiftly. I shall be ready for Cana in an hour, ready for Calvary in a few moments. I shall go back to enter into the struggle of the multitude; and the multitude will say, "There is no desert with *him* !"

THE AMBULANCE CORPS.

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”—REVELATION XIV. 4.

THERE are three classes in the Christian Life—the men of the wing, the men of the couch, and the men of the road. The first are those who fly before ; they are the pioneers of progress, they are in advance of their fellows. The second are those who stand still, or rather lie still ; they are the invalids of the human race ; they come not to minister, but to be ministered unto. The third are those who follow ; they are the ambulance corps of humanity ; they are the sacrificial souls that come on behind. I think with St. John that these last are the most beautiful souls of all. They are lovely in their unobtrusiveness. They do not wish to

lead, they would rather be in the rear; they come forward only when others are driven backward. They want no glory from the battle, no wreath for the victory, no honourable mention amid the heroes. They seek the wounded, the dying, the dead. They anoint for life's burial, they bring spices for the crucified, they give the cup of cold water, they wash the soiled feet. They break the fall of Adam; they break the fall of Magdalene. They take in Saul of Tarsus after he becomes blind. They are attracted by defects, they are lured by every form of helplessness. They come out to meet the shadows; they go in the track, not of the lark, but of the nightingale; they follow the Lamb.

Captain of salvation, put me in the rear of Thine army—with the ambulance corps! It is not for the sake of safety that I ask it; it is not to be relieved from the burden and the heat of the day that I wish to be in the rear. It is because I think the trouble is greater there; it is because I see more room for sacrifice, more chance of doing good. There are some whom Thou sendest before Thee—

angels of the everlasting gospel who fly in advance over the face of heaven. Speed them, bless them! But I am not fitted to be one of these; I am not swift enough, I am not brilliant enough. Put me in a sphere where swiftness is not wanted, where brilliancy is not required! Give me the trouble without the glitter, O Lord! Let others lead! —I am content to follow. Be Thou my rearward! Help me to serve Thee in the background! Is it not written, “They that tarry at home divide the spoil.” I cannot fight Thy battles, but I can nurse Thy wounded. I cannot repel Thy foes, but I can repair Thy fortress. I cannot conduct Thy marches, but I can succour those who have fainted by the way. Write my name amongst those who *follow* Thee!

THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY.

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain."—ISAIAH XL. 9.

Is there not something irrelevant here? We should expect the words to be, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, speak them out boldly." But why tell her to go up into the high mountain—what has the altitude to do with it? Everything. The first condition of all teaching is simply altitude; it is before your grammar, before your orthography, before your eloquence. When any one speaks to me, the first thing I want to know is the height of the man. High words mean little with a small personage, small words mean much with a great one. A superficial mind says, "You have done magnificently;" a veteran says, "You have done pretty well;"

the first is dross, the second is gold. I shall measure your words not by their size but by *your* size. If you say, "I believe in God," I shall ask the depth of your heart, the height of your imagination, the length of your view, the breadth of your knowledge. It is easy for a shallow heart to have faith. The boy in the poem who thought the tree-tops reached the sky could have had little meaning in the word "heaven." Paul speaks of faith removing mountains; but it is equally true that it is the mountains of life that give value to faith.

Get ye up then into the high mountain, ye who have a message to bring! Be greater than your message — always, everywhere! Do not say, "Follow not me, but follow what I tell you!" Paul was a very humble man, but he did not say that; he said in so many words, "Be ye followers of me!" The man — the man! that is the main thing. Be above your business, higher than your books, greater than your sermons, more instructive than your lessons! Go up to the mount before giving the law! Ascend the slopes of Sinai alone before proclaiming the will of the

Father! Enter into the silence of His presence ere you come into the presence of the multitude! Catch the sunlight on the hill-top ere you speak to the dwellers of the plain! Unveil yourself to the eyes of God before you reveal your message to the sight of men! There is no argument so strong as the arguer; there is no command so weighty as the commander; there is no teaching so powerful as the teacher. When Jesus saw the multitude He went up into a mountain; He desired His presence to be greater than His precepts. The words were to be uttered on the plain, but the sermon was to come from the height. Ye who have tidings to bear, go up first to Him!

THE RESISTANCE TO OBLIVION.

“Remember Me.”—LUKE XXIII. 42.

THE heart, like the intellect, has a desire for immortal memory. It is not the product of conceit, but of humanity. It is the soul's assertion of its helplessness when left alone—its cry for support from other souls. Do you know the meaning of the English word “Remember”? It literally means “Member me again.” It is the sign of one who is passing out of a family circle—going, let us say, to a foreign land. He says, “Member me again! When you gather around the household board, or sit at night by the winter fire, keep a place vacant for me! Keep a gap in your hearts where the old chair should be! Do not forget to count me among the members of the family; do not omit to

number me in the circle in which I am not seen!" And so we all ask in the prospect of the great journey. What most of us fear in death is not that we shall cease to be; it is that we shall cease to be members of the family of man. We doubt not that there are circles beyond the sun; but what of the circles below it? Shall we be members of the earth no more? Shall the last link be broken that binds us to the clay? Shall we be blotted out from time? Shall we part from the seen and temporal? Shall our feet have no right to be listened for in the march of the earthly army? We stretch our hands through the void and cry, "Member me again — re-member me!"

Be still, my soul! thy prayer is answered. Thy Lord has offered to re-member thee. Knowest thou what is meant by being a member of Christ's body? To be lifted into a mystic circle? No; to be re-instated in the circle of earth. Christ's communion is not mystical; it is that which prevents mysticism. Mere immortality would draw thee away into the invisible, would separate thee from the order of human things. But the membership

in Christ's body brings thee back. It restores thee to the *life* of the body; it gives men a right to think of thee as a citizen of time. The Brahman speaks of death as a breaking of the bottle which sends the enclosed water back into the parent sea. O cruel sea, which destroys the individual drop! But Christ puts back the drop into the bottle. He restores the body, the house, the form. He preserves the human relationship. Thine shall be no flight beyond the stars; thine shall be no blending with the infinite sea; thine shall be no fading of the cloud into the imperial blue. Thou shalt keep the cloud, thou shalt retain the cross, thou shalt hold fast the care which makes thee human; and men shall say of thee when death has dissolved the tie, "He is still our brother—he is re-membered in the family of man."

THE BREADTH OF CHRIST'S RELIGION.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”—PSALM XXIII. 5.

CHRIST'S is the only religion that spreads a table in the presence of its enemies. This is very remarkable, because there is no religion which hates sin like that of Jesus. The only faith that will admit to its table a guest with soiled robes is the faith that, of all others, desires purity. The Brahman must have the flesh crucified before the river of life joins the great sea. The Greek must have the flesh beautified ere earth can be an object of interest to heaven. The Roman must have the flesh fortified ere so weak a thing as man can be enrolled in the coming kingdom. But Christ accepts us for an aspiration, for a sigh, for a

tear. He lets us sit down as we are, without one plea of present excellence. He lets us come to *His* Communion when we are beneath *man's* communion. All other teachers cry, "Be ye cleansed and come"; *He* says, "Come and be cleansed." *They* tell me to put on the white robes that I may enter heaven; *He* bids me enter heaven that I may put on the white robes. *They* bid the prodigal reform, and he will be allowed to get back; *He* enjoins him to come back, and he will have a chance to reform. He prepares our table in the presence of our enemies.

I thank Thee, O Father, that I am judged, not by fact, but by faith. I thank Thee that I am allowed to sit down in the midst of my foes. Thou hast accepted me, not for what I am, but for what I should like to be. Thou hast measured me, not by the attainments of my life, but by the glance of my eye. I have no power to paint even a stroke; but my gaze rests on a perfect model. Thou hast measured me by that gaze, O my Father. Thou hast seen me in the portrait-gallery, ignorant of the very elements of art, but "looking unto Jesus." That look has redeemed me in Thy

sight. In the very presence of my enemies Thou hast seen me. Ignorant, powerless, unable to put my hand to one stroke of beauty, with nothing but the admiring eye, Thou hast seen me. Thou hast accepted my promise as a fulfilment; Thou hast paid me in advance. Thou hast imputed to me my to-morrow and ignored my yesterday. Thou hast given me a summer for the song of a first swallow. Thou hast sent me a full-blown flower in exchange for a primrose. Thou hast prepared for me a place at the feast above my station. Thou hast furnished my house beyond my means. Thou hast sent me gifts for which I have no room in my present dwelling. My table is in the wilderness; my bow is in the cloud; my ark is in the flood; my song is in the night; my road is on the sea; my peace is in the storm; my Christ is in the manger; my crown is on the Cross. I have been chosen by Thee in the presence of Thine enemies.

THE HIGHER AND LOWER CRITICISM.

“There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star. . . . [Herod] demanded of them where Christ should be born.”—MATTHEW II. 1, 2, and 4.

HERE are two inquiries of very much the same nature, so far as *words* are concerned. The wise men and Herod both ask about the Child Jesus, and ask in nearly identical terms. What is the difference? It lies in the motive. The wise men inquire that they may bring their gold; Herod inquires that he may kill. There is a reverent, and there is an irreverent, spirit of inquiry. There is a criticism which comes from love, and a criticism which comes from lovelessness. There are two reasons why I may wish to study a difficulty; I may

want to clear it away, or I may want to deepen it. The wise men were the one; Herod was the other. It is not the subject of inquiry that makes it either good or bad, it is the spirit in which it is done. Why do you pore over a blot on the manuscript? Is it because you want to take it out, or is it because you hope it will spoil the writing? There are things which "the angels desire to look into;" there may be students among the angels in all worlds. But if I desire to look into a thing that I may find it dark, if I wish to investigate on the chance that I may discover a flaw, I belong, not to the camp of the angels, but to the camp of Herod.

Lord, let me see Thy star before I inquire after Thy coming! I would meet Thee ere I ask about Thee. First Thyself, then Thy surroundings—that would be the order of my thoughts. Meet me at the tabernacle door! Meet me before I enter the temple of research! I would gaze on Thy beauty first of all; I would love Thee ere I learn of Thee. It is one thing to follow paths *in search of* Thee: it is another thing to follow paths *after* Thee. I would love Thyself before I scrutinise Thy

portrait. Thou art better than Thy portrait, O Lord. Who could paint Thee adequately ! Not even inspiration could paint Thee adequately. If I can see Thee first, I shall interpret Thy picture by Thee, and not Thee by Thy picture. O send out Thy *light* ; then shall I go unto Thine *altar*. I would not begin with the dark places ; I would start with the brightness of the morning. The manger cannot lead to Thy star, but Thy star can lead to the manger ; reveal Thy star, O Lord !

ISLAND MOMENTS.

“The burden of the desert of the sea.”—ISAIAH XXI. 1.

THERE is a burden in all vast things; they oppress the soul. The firmament gives it; the mountain gives it; the prairie gives it. But I think nothing gives it like looking on the sea. The sea suggests something which the others do not— a sense of desertness. In the other cases the vastness is broken to the eye. The firmament has its stars, the mountain has its peaks, the prairie has its flowers; but the sea, where it is open sea, has nothing. It seems a strange thing that the prophet, in making the sea a symbol of life's burden, should have selected its aspect of loneliness. Why not take its storms? Because the heaviest burden of life is not its storms, but its solitude. There are no moments so pain-

ful as our island moments. One half of our search for pleasure is to avoid self-reflection. The pain of solitary responsibility is too much for us. It drives the middle-aged man into fast living, and the middle-aged woman into gay living. I cannot bear to hear the discord of my own past. It appals me; it overwhelms me; I fly to the crowd to escape my unaccompanied shadow.

Unaccompanied? Thou art mistaken, O my soul. Never art thou so near to land as when thou hearest the discord of the waves. Why do the waves sound discordant when thou art alone with conscience? Not because thou art far out to sea, but because thou art closer to the shore. There is a band of music on the shore, and it strikes upon thine ear. It is the land-music that makes the sea-discord. Why is it that in the crowd the jarring is not revealed? It is because the music is not heard there. Thou canst never hear discord until thou hast first heard music. There are sounds of melody in the Father's house before the prodigal reaches land. He becomes seasick when he is homesick, and his home-sickness is the sight of land. It is

nearness to thy God that makes thee long for Him. It is the murmur of the New Jerusalem that reveals thy solitude. Elias is come already. The sea has become a burden because thou hast caught sight of the coast ; it is by the light of heaven that thou learnest the loneliness of the deep. Thy desert is the shadow of God's city ; thy discord is the echo of God's music ; thy silence is the answer to God's voice ; thy weariness of the wave is thy vision of the outspread land. Thy burden is the promise that there shall be no more sea.

THE IMPERISHABLE FOUNTAIN.

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”—JOHN IV. 13, 14.

OUR Lord does not say that the objects of worldly ambition are bad, He says they are fleeting. What He denies is not their legitimacy, but their permanence. He says the man who drinks of the earthly fountain will thirst again, the man who drinks of the heavenly fountain will never thirst. What is this magic fountain of abiding waters? It is Love. Love is the only thing which I need never outgrow. I am bound to outgrow everything else. How many gifts to my youth would be gifts to my old age! Wealth, fame, power, physical beauty, are all for the morning and the midday; they are little

coveted at evening. But Love in its old age can keep the dew of its youth. I have seen a virtuous attachment, which was formed by the girl and the boy, retain amid the shadows its morning glow. The heart never grows old with *time*. It may grow old with grief, or bitterness, or care—but not with time. Time has no empire over the heart. It has an empire over the eye, over the ear, over the cheek, over the hand—but not over the heart. The heart may be swept by storms, but not corroded by decay. It keeps no record of the flying years; it is untouched by the winter snow. The inscription upon its gates is ever this: "There shall be no night there."

Imperishable water, let me drink of thee! Even here below thou art the only abiding thing, the only permanent protest against my graves. Thou art Christ in me, the hope of glory. Nothing else can be my hope of glory. Other fountains are sealed by the seasons. The sight grows dim; the music grows faint; the perfume quits the flower; the eloquence deserts the lips; the arm hangs heavy; the feet lag behind in the race. But

thou, my heart, art ever springing even when thou art not singing. There is hope in thy very sorrow; it is thy protest and thy prophecy. Thou holdest thy dead, not in the grave, but in thee; thou waterest the roses round them; thou wilt not let them go. Thy tears are themselves a gush of living water. They are the cry of possession, the claim of right, the refusal to seal the fountain of hope. Thy *love* is thy hope. Keep it ever flowing; never let it dry! Better it should run with tears than cease to run at all. Its weeping and its joy are alike prophetic; its sighing and its singing are thy springs of endless life.

GOD'S MUSIC-LESSON.

“ And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

—REVELATION XIV. 3.

THERE are songs which can only be learned in the valley. No art can teach them; no master of music can convey them; no rules of voice can make them perfectly sung. Their music is in the heart. They are songs of memory, of personal experience. They bring out their burden from the shadows of the past; they mount on the wings of yesterday. What race that never felt the pains of exile could sing that old Scottish song, “ Oh why left I my hame!” It could only come from the memory of storm and stress driving the wanderer across many a sea. St. John says that even in heaven there will be a song that

can only be fully sung by the sons of earth—the strain of redemption. Doubtless it is a song of triumph—a hymn of victory to the Christ who has made us free. But the sense of triumph must come from the memory of the chain. No angel, no archangel, can sing it so sweetly as my soul. To sing it as I sing it they must pass through my exile, and this they cannot do. None can learn it but the children of the Cross.

And so, my soul, thou art receiving a music-lesson from thy Father. Thou art being educated for the choir invisible. There are parts of the symphony that none can take but thee. There are chords too minor for the angels. There may be heights in the symphony which are beyond thy scale—heights which the angels alone can reach. But there are depths which belong to *thee*, and can only be touched by thee. Thy Father is training thee for the part the angels cannot sing; and the school is sorrow. I have heard men say that He sends thy sorrow to *prove* thee; nay, He sends thy sorrow to educate thee, to train thee for the choir invisible. In the night He is preparing thy song. In the valley He is tuning

thy voice. In the cloud He is deepening thy chords. In the storm He is enriching thy pathos. In the rain He is sweetening thy melody. In the cold He is moulding thine expression. In the transition from hope to fear He is perfecting thy lights and shades. Despise not thy school of sorrow, O my soul ; it will give thee a unique part in the universal song.

THE SECULAR POWER OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL.

"He that descended is the same also that ascended."—
EPHESIANS IV. 10.

THE only power that ever stooped to the masses was the power accustomed to the *heights*; the man that *descended* was the man who had *ascended*. The best secular work was done by the most spiritual nature. We should not have expected this. We should have thought that the secular Roman—the man who never raised his eyes to *another* world, would have been the kindest to *this* world. We should have thought that the greatest sympathy with the invalid would have come from his fellow-invalid. But it did not; it came from the green fields. The man on a level with the masses did not help them; they had to lift up their eyes to the

hills. The help to those wounded in the world came not from the world; it came from above. Men said, "How beautiful on the *mountains* are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" The help of the Roman was not Rome but Christ, not earth but heaven, not night but day, not sin but holiness, not poverty but wealth; none ever *descended* but He who *ascended*.

My soul, why complainest thou against God in the interest of man! Why sayest thou, "I am a humanitarian; do not speak to me of things above when my brother is starving!" Where is the refuge of the humanitarian if not above! It is the man of the *mount* that stoops to the plain. Seest thou that famished crowd in the desert. Their brother man fears to aid them; he is afraid the interests of political economy will suffer, "whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude!" But the *Divine* Man has no space for fear; perfect love has cast out fear. It did not content Him that He Himself was there to minister to the wants of the *spirit*. Compassion for the body outran anxiety for

the spirit. He surpassed the world in its own sphere—its care for to-morrow. He put the secularists to shame, the humanitarians to shame. He did not tell them they were neglecting heaven; He told them they were neglecting earth. He said they were above their own business—too high for the things they aspired to. He saw them afraid to soil their hands with their native mire. *He* was not afraid. He had gazed on the heights supernal, and therefore He could bend to the dust. He had seen the King in His beauty, and so He could touch the slave in his deformity. He had bathed in the day-spring from on high, and therefore He could cleanse the leper in the vale. The Man that went deepest down was the Man from heaven.

THE HUMILITY OF LOVE.

“Love vaunteth not itself.”—I CORINTHIANS XIII. 4.

THIS is the main difference between love and duty. Duty has a sense of merit ; love has none. Duty has always the feeling that it has done very well ; love never admits that it has come up to the mark. Duty says, “Lord, we have prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name done many wonderful works ;” love cries, “When saw we Thee an hungered and gave Thee meat !” Whence this humility of love compared to duty ! Is not love the higher of the two ! Duty is mere talent ; love is genius. Why should genius be more humble than talent ? Because it really has less trouble. It is as natural for genius to soar as for the bird to soar. It is written, “Genius does what it *must* ; talent does what

it *can*." Therefore is talent always more conceited than genius; it is more conscious of its labour because it really has more labour. Love is the genius of the heart. It does its work because it cannot help it—not because it ought, but because it must. That is why it repudiates merit. That is why it casts its crown in the dust. That is why it declines the laurel wreath.

Lord, I should like to be amongst those who veil their faces before Thy throne; it is the humility of genius, the humility of love. I can never have the face veiled until I have stood before Thy throne; only the men of the front view are humble. When I was far back from the throne of Thy beauty I was wonderfully vain; there was no veil upon my face; I marvelled that the Cherubim were veiled. But as I draw near I begin to understand. It is their revelation that makes their veil. It is their deep sense of love that takes away their sense of merit. They do not feel the stones beneath their feet. They do not hear the waves that lash their shore. They do not see the clouds upon their sky. Therefore they say: I have no merit in serving Thee, O my

Christ. I cannot help it. It is no crown to me because it is no choice to me. If I had less love I might have more vaunting. If I served Thee from duty I might praise myself every morning. But where shall love find room for boasting! Can the mother vaunt her devotion to her child! Can the brook vaunt its reflection of the sun! Can the flower vaunt its drinking of the heavenly dew! My love to Thee must always make me feel that I am following afar off, never so far as when nearest to Thyself. My face is most deeply veiled when I stand before the throne.

THE SPIRITUAL MICROSCOPE.

“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.”—2 PETER
III. 8.

PETER has learned the use of the microscope since he was a youth in Galilee. He was then all for the telescope—for bringing big things near. He saw the opposite hills across the sea so near that he thought he could reach them at a bound. To plant his feet upon the wave, to build his tabernacle upon the mountain, were his first ideals of glory. The aim of his youth was to diminish great things—to see a thousand years as one day. But with age there has come to him the other side of the picture—the magnifying of little things. The microscope takes the place of the telescope. He had begun by seeing big things as trifles; he ends by seeing

trifles as big things. To the eye of his youth a thousand years were as one day ; to the eye of his age one day is as a thousand years.

I should like my latest experience to be that of Peter—the experience of God’s microscope. I need it in old age more than in youth. In age I have the sense of wasted years and little time to retrieve them. I am deterred from amendment by despair. How can the short time at my command outweigh the long years I have squandered ! How grateful is the answer of God’s microscope—“One day is as a thousand years !” Thy Father says to thy soul : “I measure not thy path by length of time. One day in My courts can retrace the steps of a *thousand* days *outside* My courts. Hast thou pondered the meaning of the eleventh hour ! Hast thou considered the promise to the penitent, ‘To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise !’ Thinkest thou he got too generous measure ! He did not. There was nothing pretermitted from his discipline ; it was only compressed. He saw the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time—not in their glory but in their unrighteousness. There are for him

and for thee moments of acceleration—times when I bind together yesterday and to-day and to-morrow. Say not it is too late to retrace so long a journey! *My* Spirit has wings. One day in *My* chariot can bring thee home—home to thy first purity. Spring into *My* chariot, thou that hast wandered far astray! Spring into *My* chariot, and I will bear thee back *in a night*—back to the child Jesus, back to the angels of Bethlehem, back to the shepherds' song! *One hour* with *Me* will redeem a thousand erring years."

THE REST OF HOPE.

“ My flesh shall rest in hope.”—PSALM XVI. 9.

THERE are three kinds of rest in this world—despair, possession and hope. There is a rest of despair—a stillness which comes from the sense that there is no use to strive. There is a rest of possession—a folding of the hands because we have reached the top of the hill. But there is a rest different from either—a rest of hope. It is unlike despair because it comes not from the sense of emptiness; it is unlike possession because it comes not from the sense of fulness. It is not the consciousness of defeat; it is not the triumph of victory; it is the rest of prospective joy. And I think the sleeping-draughts of hope are those my Father sends me most of all. He never sends me despair; He rarely sends me full posses-

sion; but He giveth His beloved sleep through *hope*. Our calmest moments are our moments of prospective joy. Why is youth so fearless amidst its dangers? It is because of its dreams. If it saw the road on which it was going, it would stand still. But God hides the present from its eye; He shows it only to-morrow. We are all somnambulists in youth. We walk not only in a dream, but by a dream. We skirt the edge of the precipice and do not fall. If we saw it, we should fall. But our eye is far away—upon the hills delectable, upon the rivers of gold. One sight of the pitfalls that surround us would awaken us into horror; but we see only *straight before us* in the dream; we rest in hope.

Ever so lead me, O my God! I cannot live by the day, and live calmly. There is a ravine by my side over which I must totter if I look. The only chance for me is Thy somnambulism—walking in dreams of Thee. Send me the sleep of Thy beloved, the dream of Thy beloved! Send me the sleep of Thy Son upon the stormy sea! What made Him sleep amid the storm! Truly his flesh rested

in hope, not experience. So would *I* rest, O my Father. Lead me through the night by the vision of the morning! Guide me through the storm by dreams of the haven! Float me o'er the flood by sight of the olive leaf! Bear me above the precipice by a straight march for Thy glory! Let the angel of the future lead me into the present! Let the light of eternity prepare me for the hour! Let the sight of the Crown precede the bearing of the Cross! Let me see *Thee* before I meet my brother! Let me hear the bells of the New Jerusalem ere I listen to any chimes of earth! The chimes of earth would jar on me if *Thy* bells did not complete their symphony. I shall only find repose when I shall "rest in hope."

CHRISTIAN UNANIMITY.

“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”—PHILIPPIANS IV. 2.

ST. PAUL does not ask that these women should be of the same mind, but that they should be of the same mind “in the Lord.” In the things of earth unanimity of opinion is not attainable. Euodias and Syntyche need not be of the same mind in the gallery of *physical* beauty. One may prefer Raphael, the other Angelo. One may adore the gentle, the other the sublime. One may be riveted to the vale; the other may have the eye fixed upon the mountain’s brow. But in the *moral* gallery there is one figure which brooks no diversity of judgment; it is Christ. He is the absolute beauty—the union of all beauties. Raphael and Angelo meet there. The tender and the sublime meet there. The valley and

the mount meet there. *There* rest in unity what *we* hold in contrast. Peter's fire and John's gentleness, Mary's mysticism and Martha's practicalness, Paul's depth and Nathaniel's guilelessness—they all rest there. There meet the lordly tree and the simple flower; there blend the river and the stream; there unite the man and the child; there repose the lion and the lamb. We can all gather there.

Unite our hearts, O Lord, to praise Thy name! None else can unite us. I must go up to heaven if I want to be made one with earth. All things below divide me from my brother—my home and its interests, my wealth and its requirements, my Church and its governments. The earth shows many suns—a sun in the river, a sun in the pool, a sun in the brook, a sun in the sea, a sun on the garden wall. But when I raise my eyes to heaven these many suns are all one and the same. Men are quarrelling below about which is the best sun. Some hold by that in the river, some swear by that in the pool, some walk by that on the garden wall. They would all be at one if they looked up to *Thee*.

Thy light is the union of the many lights—the river, the pool, the brook, the sea, the garden wall. Unite our little systems, O Lord! Let them cease to *be*—not by annihilation but by absorption! Let them fade, not into darkness, but into united light! Take away the separating rim from each of them! Reveal the delusion of the many suns! Tell the diverse worshippers that they have all been unconsciously seeking *Thee*! Tell them that the sun in the river, and the sun in the pool, and the sun in the sea, and the sun on the garden wall are all fragments of one light—*Thy* light—the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever! We shall all be of one mind when we look at the *sky*.

A FALSE VIEW OF SACRIFICE.

“Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down.”—MATTHEW IV. 5, 6.

THE pinnacle of the temple means the height of religiousness. Can one be tempted in the height of religiousness? Yes. There is a false view of piety—that which values sacrifice for its own sake. The tempter asked Christ to court danger because it was danger. He asked Him to manifest His piety by putting Himself in a miserable condition, by exposing Himself to the hand of death. No man can manifest his piety by his misery; that was a *mistake* of the tempter. Piety must be based on joy. It is often called to sacrifice, but never for the sake of sacrifice—only for love’s sake, joy’s sake. Christ never

made death a goal—not even on His way to Jerusalem. His goal was always life, life eternal, life for evermore. It was for this He endured the cross, it was for this He despised the shame. He never dreamed that He would please His Father by the mere fact of His pain. It was the beauty of life, the joy of life, that made death possible to Him; it was so beautiful that it was worth dying for. Not sacrifice, but jubilee, was His guiding star; only the heights of Olivet could have tempted Him to the steep of Calvary.

Why sayest thou then, my soul, that the child of thy Father should immolate himself, mutilate himself, cast himself down the precipice! Does the parent bird love to see its offspring with a broken wing! Grief is ever a broken wing. Thy sorrow never helps thee to fly—not even thy godly sorrow. There have been sorrowful hearts that have risen up to heaven's gates—but not *by* their sorrow. They have risen on the wing that was unbroken. Their power was not the joy lost, but the joy remaining; they mounted on the sunbeam which the cloud had spared. So shall it be with thee. Do not court the

broken wing! If it come to thee, thou needst not despair. Thou still shalt be able to fly. But thou shalt fly in spite of it, not by reason of it. Thou shalt soar on the wing that remaineth, the "*rest* that remaineth." Bless thy Father for that remaining rest! Bless Him for thine unbroken wing! Bless Him for thy sunbeam unextinguished! Bless Him for thy lingering light! Bless Him for the songs in the darkness! Bless Him for the lining in the cloud! Bless Him that in all thy falling thou hast never been cast utterly down! for it is thy distance from the ground that makes the strength of thy faith. Let the pinnacle of thy temple be a pinnacle of joy.

GOD'S HELP IN TRIBULATION.

“He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.”—MARK I. 13.

It was a meeting of extremes—the wild beasts and the angels! Two ends of the ladder of creation rested on the Son of Man! His human nature had never been so lowly, never so near the ground. He was experiencing what we all at times experience—a sense of the desert. The sheen had faded from the waters of Jordan; the dove had departed; the crowd had deserted; again as in His infancy He was with the beasts of the field. Yet it was now again that the angels came. It is always in His depression that I read of the angels coming—in the manger, in the wilderness, in the garden. Why do they come in His depression? Because there is a virtue in depression? Nay, the reverse—

because there is a danger in it. God will not let me have a cross without the alabaster box ; He fears the effect on me of unqualified pain. There is not in all His Providence a night without a star. He plants a flower on every grave, and that flower is the boundary line beyond which grief cannot go.

Therefore it is, O Father, that I do not die. I could not have lived with the wild beasts if the angels had not come. I have often marvelled that I did not die in the desert. When I saw it from afar I said, "I could not live there." Yet I have passed through, and my life is preserved. The moment I entered the desert I felt a nameless strength. It was Thy nameless angel, O Father—the angel that struggled with Jacob to keep him standing when he seemed to fall. So should *I* have fallen but for Thy nameless angel—Thy strength that passeth understanding. It was not that my anticipation of the desert proved false ; it was as bad as I expected it to be. If I had been left to myself, I should have grovelled on the ground. But the nameless Hand upheld me, the unseen Presence saved me, the indefinable Peace supported me. It

was an incomprehensible peace. It came where it had no right to be. By all the laws of nature I ought to have fallen; the gravity of the whole earth was dragging me down; wherefore did I stand! It was Thy veiled arm that held me. O Peace irrational, O Strength invisible, O Rest inexplicable, O Power that movest through shut doors, I have lived by *Thee*! Thy staff in the valley, Thy rose in the desert, Thy star in the night, Thy crown in the cross, Thy bells in the snow, Thy voice in the storm, Thy print in the wounds, Thine angel with the beasts of the field—it is *they* that have comforted me.

THE SECRET OF SIN'S ATTRACTIVE- NESS.

“The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain.”
—MATTHEW IV. 8.

WHEN Satan tempted Christ he took Him up to a mountain. He gave Him a lofty view. He tried to make Him feel that he was suggesting something noble. He offered Him the very thing He was sent to win—the kingdoms of the world and their glory. It is ever so. No man is first tempted by sin *as* sin. The power of sin is its disguise of beauty. If it appeared in its own name we should not receive it. But when it knocks at the door it gives a false name—the name of virtue. We let it in on false pretences. It has the dress of a seraph, the gait of an archangel, the voice of a messenger from heaven. If Barabbas came as a robber, no

one would prefer him to the Lord. But Barabbas is the mock Christ, the pretended Messiah, the fancied Jesus. He claims the same mission. He offers the same reward. He points to the same goal—emancipation, freedom, power. We choose him by a mistaken identity. We take him for the Lord of Glory.

My soul, in thine hour of temptation, I am not afraid of thy meanness, but of thy nobleness. It is thy mountain, not thy valley, that I fear. How often have I seen thee in thy youth led away by a mistaken identity—the robe of Christ on the form of Barabbas! How often has the cup of kindness made thee forget thy manhood! How often has the hour that men call good-fellowship become thine hour of danger! How often has the warm heart led thee into quagmires from which a colder heart would have kept thee free! Wouldst thou be cold, then? God forbid! Do not forsake thy mountain view because it has dangers! Does Satan tempt thee by lofty hopes to sin? By the same hopes Christ tempts thee to good. All the lures of the tempter are the counterfeits of

Him. His is the true cup of kindness—the brotherhood of communion. His is the real hour of good-fellowship—the meeting of kindred souls. His is the feast where animosities are buried, the feast where injuries are forgiven, the feast where the past is wiped away. His is the song of the good time coming—the song of Moses and the Lamb—the song of triumph after toil. His are the kingdoms of the world and their glory, the earth and the fulness thereof. Keep thine exceeding high mountain, O my soul; but greet upon its summit not Barabbas but Christ!

THE GLORIES OF EASTER MORN.

“Made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.”—ROMANS I. 3, 4.

EASTER DAY was a new Christmas Day; it was the second birth of Christ. His second birth was grander than His first. His first birth was under disadvantages. The disadvantage lay not in the manger, but in the royal lineage. The swaddling bands that circumscribed Him were not the facts of His poverty, but the glories of His ancestors; the royal line of David separated Him from the main line of humanity. But when He came from the dead He changed his lineage. He broke with the line of David—with all lines but the lowliest. His second life was not from Bethlehem: it was from the common dust of all cities—from the city of the dead.

We think of Him as nearer to us when a child. That is a great mistake. As a child He was always the Jewish Messiah—nearer to the tribes of Israel than to the tribes of Man. But with Easter morn He came up from the *depths*—from the dust of death. He came from the place where all join hands; and that is the secret of His resurrection power. We all meet in the lowest valley. We do not all meet on the highest mountain, on any mountain. We are not made one by joy; the privilege of the Jew divides him from the Gentile. But calamity makes us one; sin and death make us one. Christmas morning was beautiful, but it came from the fields of gold; Easter morning is more precious, for it comes from the miry clay.

Therefore, O Morn, I greet thee! Thou hast a message of hope for my lowliest hour, a promise of rising for my most prostrate moment. I could not greet Elijah's chariot; I could not greet Enoch's disappearance. These were not the conquest of my lowliness; they were the flight from it. They did not master the forces of decay; they escaped them; they passed death by. But thou, mine

Easter Day, hast risen from the great sea.
Thou hast come from out the wave that has
engulfed all the world. Thou hast raised
thy head from the night and from the cold.
Thou hast shone out from the *unshining*
place—the place of my despair. Thou hast
rung the bells of joy over the scene of my
desolation. Thou hast made the wilderness
glad; thou hast caused the desert to blossom.
The fir-tree has sprung where the thorn was
expected; the myrtle has come forth where
the briar ought to have been. Thou hast
made the unlikely spot to praise thee; the
hope which thou bringest is hope from the
dead.

THE CURE FOR BITTERNESS.

“They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”—EXODUS XV. 23 and 25.

“WHEN he had cast a tree in the waters, the waters were made sweet.” It was a strange remedy. One would have thought it was a case for extraction, not addition. The burden of bitterness is a very heavy one. When it comes to us our first cry is, “Empty out the waters!” “No,” says the Divine voice, “instead of emptying them, put something more *in* them!” And truly the Divine voice is right. What we need for our bitterness is not the *removal* of things, but the seeing of them in a new relation. The Psalmist speaks of a tree planted by rivers of water. A tree makes a great difference to our view of the water; it may change it from monotony

into beauty; it adds a new fact to the old thing. So is it with my calamities; one added point of knowledge will chase them away. When the child is first going to school, it often sheds the waters of Marah. How will you cure these waters? By keeping him from school? God forbid! Show him the developed tree! Show him the fruit of knowledge! Show him that without school he will be a solitary man—mindless in a thinking world! The sight of the tree in the waters will make the waters sweet.

O Thou, whose suffering was sweetened by the sight of the redeeming tree, make Thine experience my own! I do not ask that the waters be assuaged on the face of my earth; I dare not ask that; but tell me that the waters are nourishing my *tree*! Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me! Show me it is impossible the cup should pass from me if I am to grow; put the *tree* in my waters! I do not ask any more than Newman, to see the distant scene; but I want to see something which is not distant—Thy will. I do not pray to know where the waters are going; but I do want to see where they are

coming from. I wish to feel that they are from Thee. Tell me that, and I am satisfied. They may rise up to the brim if they come from Thee. It is revelation, not emancipation, I need. Let the waters remain; but shine through them, shine across them, shine beneath them, O Lord! Show me Thy way in the sea! Reveal Thy path in the deep! Reflect Thy light in the waters! Put thy music in the rolling billows! Say, when the storm is walking through the waves, "It is *I*"! Then shall there be no bitterness in the taste of the brine; the waters will be sweet if they are shared by *Thee*.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PRAYER.

“And he called his name Enos ; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.”—GENESIS IV. 26.

“ THEN ” ; why not before ? Why did the hour of prayer only come in the days of Enos ? Enos had fallen on degenerate days—days of Paradise lost. Why did prayer begin *then* ! Why did it not begin *in* Paradise ! Was not God nearer to *unfallen* than to fallen man ! Was not Eden flooded with the Divine presence ! Yes ; and therefore there was no place for prayer ; it was all praise. You cannot see the stars except by night. You can see more gorgeous things by day, but not these special things called stars. Even so with the day and night of the soul. Eden was the day. It was the fulness of God, the enjoyment of God, the beatific vision of the eye. But for that very reason there was

no sense of need, no prayer. Prayer could only come with the night, with the need. It is incompatible with full fruition. It needs the shadow to make its starlight, the silence to make its music, the want to make its cry. It is the bow set in the cloud, and it could be set in no other thing.

And so, my Father, there is a compensation for my night. I have been driven out from Eden into the land of swamps and marshes. But in the land of swamps and marshes I have found something I could not meet in Eden—the gate of prayer. Eden had no gate, because it had no need for an opening. It was all open together. There were no prisons to escape from, no fetters from which to be free. But the land of the stranger has given me the gate, because it has given me the wall. It has made me less near to Thee. It has put a barrier between us. It has caused me to miss Thee, to feel the want of Thee, to cry for Thee. My Christ is gone into a far country, and I stretch my hands to Him. Yet there is beauty in the stretching of the hands, the calling upon Thy name—His name. It is only the beauty of starlight; yet

starlight has a glory that belongs not to the day. It is *something* to see Thee when Thou art passing by; but to cry for Thee when Thou art past has a music all its own. It is love in absence, love in Paradise lost. It is the refusal of my soul to be weaned from Thee by distance or disaster; it is the prodigal's protest against the husks of the swine. I thank Thee that the loss of Eden has brought the hour of prayer.

THE PATH OF SACRIFICE.

“There is a path which no bird of prey knoweth ; and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.”—JOB XXVIII. 7.

I UNDERSTAND the meaning of Job’s parable to be this: “You say I must be a great sinner because I have reaped no material reward. Is man, then, a bird of prey, a vulture feeding upon the flesh! Are there no rewards but those of the body! If so, then this world is indeed a mystery. For there is a path where material reward is unknown. The bird of prey finds no place therein, the vulture no home. It is the path of sacrifice. They who tread that way receive no outward crown. Am I a sinner because I have brought home no fleshly reward! There is a path where the rewards are all unseen; and only the *highest* walk in it; its name is Love. Those who travel

by it get nothing in return ; they bring back no sheaves, Is it because of their sin they bring back no sheaves? Nay, but because of their holiness—their love. Their joy is what they give, not what they get. They do not prey upon others ; they are preyed upon. That is their glory, that is their recompense—to empty themselves, to lavish themselves, to be, not the vulture, but the voluntary victim of the vulture. Their heaven is the worldling's hell—unselfishness."

O Thou, who hast trod the path unknown to the vulture and the bird of prey, I bow this day to Thee! Thou, too, didst bring nothing home "after the flesh." No visible crown rewarded Thee. No outward plaudits greeted Thee. No material kingdom owned Thy sway. Thine was the cross from dawn to dark, the dying from morn to even. Men said, "He must be a great sinner since he is so unprosperous; let him come down from the cross and we will believe in him!" They did not see Thine inward joy, Thy real prosperity. They did not see that the path of love is itself the path of self-surrender,

that Thy cross made Thy crown. But I see it, and I come to Thee. The world will wonder; the vulture will marvel; the bird of prey will be astonished. They see only the outside, and therefore they see nothing. But my heart knows its own joy, and it is *Thy* joy—love emptying, love surrendering, love gathering flowers from out the thorns with bleeding hand to strew another's way. Thy path may be wet with tears, but they are the tears of the rainbow: show me Thy path, O Lord!

PETER'S WISH.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect."—I PETER V. 10.

WHAT a singular wish! The singular thing about it is the blot in the middle—"after ye have suffered awhile." What would you think of getting the wish from a friend—"I hope you will have sunshine, but not till after rain"! Yet this is what Peter desires for you. He forecasts for you in his heart all the gifts and graces of the Christ-life; but he asks that you may not get them without struggle—only "after ye have suffered awhile." Does it not come with a singularly bad grace from Peter—a man who could not wait five minutes for anything, who saw ever the crown before the cross! Nay, my brother, that is just the *explanation* of the wish. He spoke from bitter

experience of his own past. He had come into his kingdom too soon. He had obtained his crown before he could support its cares. His faith had been drenched in the brine; his love had been cooled in the judgment-hall; as he sat by the fire he had cried, "I know not the man!" That is why his wish becomes beautiful. He says: "I do not want you to be like me—finding the keys too soon. I do not want you to be innocents—pure because there is no cloud, calm because there is no wind, honest because there is no temptation, loyal because there is no danger. I wish yours to be the bloom of the flower—struggling from below, of the day—emerging from the night, of the man—outgrowing the child. May He who has called you to glory by the cross perfect you only 'after ye have suffered awhile'!"

Even so would *we* pray, O Father. There is a peace which we would not possess, because it is not the peace of Thy Son. There is a silence which is mere emptiness—the calm of the deaf; it is the stillness of vacancy. Be not that our peace, O God! We cannot know *Thy* stillness till it is broken.

We cannot see Thy beauty till it is shaded.
We cannot reap the healthy benefit of Thine
air till we have shrunk from the breath of
another air. We see Thee not in Thy full
glory till we have met the tempter in the
wilderness. Thy sun comes after rain; Thy
day comes after night; Thy calm comes after
storm; Thy music comes after discord; Thy
joy comes after pain; Thy freedom comes
after slavery; Thy life comes after death.
There is no music in the silence till we have
heard the roar of battle; Thine eternal glory
would be too long for us if we did not first
“suffer a while.”

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEAVEN.

“An eternal weight of glory.”—2 CORINTHIANS IV. 17.

“A WEIGHT of glory”!—that is a very strange expression. We commonly associate a weight with oppressiveness. It is something which keeps us down, prevents us from flying into the air, restrains the exuberance of joy. Is it not singular that such a simile should be taken to mark the advent of *glory*! Should we not expect to hear, not of triumphant weightedness, but of triumphant wings! I can understand the significance of the words, “They shall mount up as eagles.” I can see the force of the command, “Lay aside every weight and run!” But why dress the new life in the old grave-clothes! Why recall a metaphor of death! Why speak of the Lord’s joy as a *weight* of glory!

Because, my soul, the joy of thy Lord *is* a weightedness. The transit from earth to heaven is not an emancipation from care; it is an emancipation from care about *thyself*. He only empties thee that thou mayst be filled again—filled with a higher care, love's care. There is a weight which is only felt in heaven, and which is heaven's glory; it is the labour of love. It has hardly begun here; it is the praise that "waiteth for God in Zion." There is a burden which has long deterred thee from lifting God's burden; it is the thought of thine own morrow. From that weight thy Lord fain would set thee free. But why? Not that thou mightst be a winged butterfly flitting from flower to flower. Nay, but that thou mightst bear a larger weight—the weight of humanity—Christ's weight of glory. The joy of thy Lord is not a bird's song; it is a heart's enlargement. The risen Christ remains not in the garden; He must ascend to the cares of His Father. The place prepared for thee is no scene of luxurious ease, no plot of ground enclosed from mortal pain. There is a gate leading into the highways and the hedges, opening

out into the far country of the prodigal son. And through this gate thy Father would have thee go—to minister, to succour, to save. This is the place prepared for thee in the mansions of thy Father. This is the ivory gate and golden where the angels go out and in. This is the narrow way which leadeth unto life; and they who have found that life retrace the road to bring their brother in. Thy weight of responsibility will be thy weight of glory.

THE SECRET OF CHRIST'S GLORY.

“As many were astonished at Thee, His visage was so marred . . . so shall He sprinkle many nations.”—ISAIAH LII. 14, 15.

THE idea I take to be, “In proportion to His reverses, so will be His power; in proportion to the marring of His visage will be His dominion over the nations.” That is a very original sentiment. It is not the common experience in the lives of men. The ordinary rule is that we succeed in proportion to our victories. The Egyptian, when he inscribes an epitaph upon the tomb, never tells of the *reverses* of his hero; he deems the *flowers* of life the best preservers of immortality. But the Prophet says there will be an exception to the rule—a man whose glory will come from what the world calls shame. He says the marred visage will be the one

face in the gallery, the observed of all observers, the admired of all admirers. The observation, the admiration, will be, not in spite of, but by reason of, the marring; it will be inspired by His cross.

Son of Man, the paradox is realised in *Thee*. It is Thy *marred visage* that has made Thee King. That by which Thou livest to-day is the thing by which men sought to kill Thee. It is Thy crown of thorns that has made Thy crown of glory. Not by Thy moments of outward majesty dost Thou survive in our hearts to-day. Not by the glories of Mount Tabor, not by the wonders of Lake Gennesaret, not even by the prophecies at Jerusalem's gate, dost Thou sway the empire of our souls. It is Thy *Cross* that draws us, Thy blood that saves us. If we bow before Thy rising from the grave, it is because in Thy risen body we find the prints of the nails. We worship in Thee the thing we once despised. We once recoiled from those who suffered pain. We said in Judea, "They are the enemies of *God*;" we said in Rome, "They are unfit for the work of *Man*." But in Thee pain has been glorified. In Thee

the weakest has become the survivor. In Thee the last is made first. In Thee the grave-clothes have become earth's royalest robes. In Thee sorrow has been turned into joy, defeat into victory, death into life. In Thee the thing deemed impure has become the purifier; men have washed their robes in Thy blood and made them white. The valley of the shadow becomes in Thee my gate of glory; I am no longer astonished that Thy visage was so marred.

THE NATURE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

"I have sinned against heaven . . . make me as one of thy hired servants. But the father said, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."—LUKE XV. 18, 19, 22.

THERE are no degrees in forgiveness. There are degrees in the holiness that *follows* forgiveness; but pardon must be perfect at its birth. Forgiveness restores each man to the place he had before he fell. If the prodigal had been a hired servant previous to his fall, he would have been made a hired servant again. There would have been no sting in that; it would have involved no stigma. But to make him a servant after he had been a son would have perpetuated the pain of memory. Nothing impedes my progress like remembrance of a dark yesterday. When the page is already blotted I am apt to blot it more. I lose heart;

I say, "It is already tarnished; what does it matter now!" If I am to get a fair start, it must be a bright start—a start with the ring and the robe. It will not help me that you lift me from the far country if you give me a place *second* to my former self. That second place is my yesterday, and I should walk by its darkness. It would dog my footsteps; it would never let me go. I should not feel that sin was unworthy of me, below me. I should always be fingering my ticket of leave. I should never be able to soar for the remembrance of the irons; memory would clip the wings of hope.

Therefore, O Father, I am glad that the robe has *preceded* my merits. I am glad Thou hast clothed me in beauty before I deserved it. I am glad Thy smile has not waited for my well-doing. It is only by Thy smile I ever shall do well; the white robe of Thy Christ alone will keep me pure. Give me the *morning* star—the star ere work begins! Give me the music and the dancing of Thy house in advance of my labours! Give me the light of Thy countenance when I am still untried, unproved! I would not seek to *win* Thy

smile; I would win *by* it. Let Thy love precede my toiling! Let Thy favour outrun my day! Let Thy pardon come before my earning! Do not put me on hire! Do not take me on probation! Send out Thy light before all things; make me glad ere I have learned to be good! When I am clothed in Thy white robe, I shall seek the far country no more.

THE SACREDNESS OF ART.

“As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there ; all my springs are in Thee.”—PSALM LXXXVII. 7.

WHETHER you take the Authorised or Revised Version, I hold the meaning to be the same—that in the good time coming art will be deemed a part of religion. The musicians will sit down among the saints because all our springs are religious springs. No music, no painting, no sculpture, no poetry, will any more be deemed secular. They will all be recognised as the inspiration of God. And are they not so ! Is not the source of art the same as the source of religion ! Do not both spring from the one feeling—the wish for something better ! The saint and the artist both picture another world because to both the present is unsatisfactory. Each conceives a higher beauty.

Each imagines a fairer sky, a purer air, a lovelier life. Each matures from a sense of want, of dissatisfaction with things below. Each strives to erase the blots in the present system. Each aims at the building of a palace which will supply the omissions of the human architect. Each has one and the same motto, "We seek a better country."

Teach me, O Lord, the sacrament of art! Teach me Thy real presence in the efforts after earthly beauty! Reveal to me that my poetic moments, my musical moments, my artistic moments, are moments of unconscious prayer, expressions of my want of *Thee*! I need Thee in the temple of nature as much as I need Thee in the temple of grace. Why do I fancy other scenes than these before me? Why do I depict more perfect forms than life has yielded? Why do I sing more melodious songs than the brook, more stirring anthems than the sea? It is because I am not satisfied. It is because my heart cries out for more than Nature—for Thee. I should have no art if I had no religion. I consider the lily of the field, but it does not content me. I consider the song of the brook, but it does

not fill me. I consider the joys of life, but they do not come up to me; I was made for *Thee*. Therefore I paint other fields, I weave other songs, I fancy other joys; and all the time I am in search of *Thee*. Thou art my picture, my poem, my song; my dream of beauty is a dream of *Thee*. It is because I have seen Thy face that I seek a new heaven and a new earth; it is because I have heard Thy voice that I aspire to richer than Nature's music. "All my springs are in *Thee*."

THE DIGNITY OF DIVINE SERVICE.

“Jesus knowing that He was come from God, and went to God, took a towel and girded Himself, and began to wash the disciples’ feet.”—JOHN XIII. 3, 4, 5.

I HAVE heard the passage explained thus: Although perfectly conscious of His very high birth and His very high destiny, Jesus nevertheless submitted to perform an act of humiliating service. I do not like that explanation. It makes the ministrant act of Jesus something foreign to His nature, something alien to His descent and to His goal. My reading of the passage is exactly the opposite: “Jesus, conscious that He came from a land of love and went to a land of love, felt that there was no sacrifice and no humiliation in this particular act of service.” He did not feel that He was stooping below Himself in washing the feet

of the disciples. He had not the sense of doing anything unworthy of His royalty, disparaging to His claims of Sonship. It was not felt to be an act of condescension. It came natural to Him. The spirit of ministration was in His blood; He got it by heredity from His Father. In the light of His antecedents, in the light of His prospects, He was unable to help it. It was His native air, His primitive culture, the necessity of His being, the law of His life.

My brother, hast thou considered this argument for service! It is not because thou shouldst be humble that thou art called to serve; it is to prevent thee from being *too* humble. It is because service is a *Divine* thing that God calls thee to it. It is not to humiliate thee that He bids thee work in the vineyard; it is to save thee from humiliation. In thy Father's land the servants are the upper circle. It is the lower circle that is waited upon, they whose lamps are gone out. Is it not written, "He shall carry the *lambs* in His bosom"—the *weaklings* of the flock! Wouldst thou *always* be a lamb—a member of the lower circle! Dost thou not hear a voice

saying, "Come up higher"! Obey that voice, my brother! Put on thy menial robes! The apparel of the heavenly spheres becomes less gorgeous as we climb. The wedding garment is a soiled garment. Thou shalt know the souls in front by the homeliness of their garb. They are dressed for the road, for the dust, for the mire. They have the livery of the hospital, the trappings of the infirmary. They are weighted with implements of service. They carry the ligaments for wounds, the salves for pain. Men say, "Who are these that have the air of serving by day and by night? Who are these with apparel so stained, with robes so dyed?" And the answer comes clear from the pure heaven, "This is the whiteness of God; these are they in front of the throne."

THE CHRISTIAN COMFORT.

“Walking in the midst of the fire.”—DANIEL III. 25.

THE fire did not arrest their motion ; they walked in the midst of it. It was one of the streets through which they moved to their destiny. The comfort of Christ's revelation is not that it teaches emancipation from sorrow ; every faith does that. But Christ teaches emancipation *through* sorrow. Did you ever ask yourself the precise difference between a prison and a tunnel. No man would hesitate for a moment which he would rather be *in*. But why ? Not on the ground of darkness, for the tunnel is the darker of the two. Not on the ground that the prison is disgrace, for there have been prisons more glorious than palaces. It is because, in the prison, life is arrested ; in the tunnel it moves

on. The cell of my confinement may be glorious, but, however glorious, I am losing time. The tunnel, on the other hand, may be dark, but, however dark, I am gaining time. I am not retarded by a moment in my mission of life; nay, I am getting a short cut to the goal. I am not merely in the valley of the shadow; I am walking, yea, running *through* it.

Glad me with this comfort, O my God! Teach me, when the shadows have gathered, that I am in the tunnel, not in the prison! It is not enough for me to know that it will be all right some day. Even if that day were come, the sight of this hour would be a blot to me unless it were seen to have been part of the way. They tell me I shall stand upon the peaks of Olivet—the heights of resurrection glory. But I want more, O my Father; I want Calvary to lead up to it. I want to know that the shadows of this world are the shades of an avenue—the avenue to the house of my Father. The avenue shades may be as dark as the prison shades, but the *thought* will make all the difference to me. Tell me my shadows come from the trees—the trees of

Thy planting ! Tell me they are the entrance to the many mansions of Thy palace ! Tell me they stop not for an hour my chariot wheels ! Tell me I am only forced to climb because Thy house is on the hill ! Give me the evidence that I am ascending, not merely toiling ! Teach me that I am coming *nearer* by letting me hear the voices *clearer*—the music and the dancing less far away ! I shall receive no hurt from sorrow if I shall *walk* in the midst of the fire.

GUIDANCE BY INFERIOR MOTIVES.

“And he [the lame man at the gate Beautiful] gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”—ACTS III. 5, 6.

“EXPECTING to receive something.” We are all led on by expectations beneath the reality. We sit at the Beautiful Gate for the sake of silver and gold. The child in the Sabbath School never dreams that its prize is the lesson; it works with a view to the excursion. The boy in the day-school deems not that his prize is knowledge; he strives for the gold or silver medal. God always brings us to the Beautiful Gate by the hope of inferior things. We come to anoint a dead body with spices; we get more than we bargained for—a living Christ.

My Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast

led me to the beautiful by human aids and motives. I never could have come for the reality; that was above my understanding. It was of no use to say to me, "You are impotent in your limbs; let me teach you to walk!" I had forgotten the *joy* of walking. I had no remembrance of the glad sense of locomotion; I needed a lower motive than the vigour of manhood. And so, my Father, Thou camest to me with the grapes of Eshcol. They clustered on the tree; they glittered in the sun. They appealed to all that belonged to me—my senses. I longed to get near them; I struggled to approach them. I began to sigh for the power of movement. It was only a sigh for grapes, not yet for manhood; yet it was accepted by Thee. It was counted to me for righteousness. Thy love imputed to my longing more than was there. It did not repel me from the Beautiful Gate, though I expected *less* than Thee. I walked with Thee rather for the view than for the company, yet Thou didst not send me away. O Love, Divine Love, unselfish, unjealous Love, I marvel in retrospect at Thee. I marvel at Thy self-forgetfulness, the sinking of all pride,

the regardlessness of personal victory. I followed Thee for the bread in the desert, for the wine in Cana, for the hosannas in Jerusalem. My lower motive was known to Thee, Yet Thou didst bid me come. My poverty of heart was before Thee, yet Thou didst bid me come. The meanness of my rags was in Thy sight, yet Thou didst bid me come—content if even for the love of silver I should stand by the golden gate.

MENTAL WEARINESS.

“Consider Him . . . lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—HEBREWS XII. 3.

WHAT a strange cure for mental weariness ! There is prescribed an increase of thought, “*consider* Him.” I should have expected an invitation to mental *rest*. When a man’s *body* is weary, we send him to sleep. When a man’s mind is weary, why do we not also prescribe repose ? Because the weariness of the mind needs an opposite cure from the weariness of the body. The weariness of the body is cured by slumber ; but the weariness of the mind can be cured only by stimulus. The cry to a languid body is, “Sleep on now, and take your rest ;” the cry to a languid mind is, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” To all who labour in

spirit, Christ says, "Come unto me." He prescribes not a sedative, but an irritant; not more sleep, but more waking. To the man of the weary *hand* He says, "Cast *your* cares upon *Me*;" but to the man of the weary heart he cries, "Take *My* yoke upon *you*."

Lord, it is *wings* I need for my weariness—love's wings. That which tires my heart is not its toil, but its inaction. It will never cease to be tired until it can soar—soar to Thee. The burden and heat of my spiritual day is not its work, but its aimlessness; give me an aim, O Lord! Sometimes even the entrance of an earthly friend transforms my soul from languor into light; much more shalt *Thou* if Thou wilt enter in. I want a new interest to heal my heart's weariness—some one to live for, some one to work for, some one to wait for, some one to long for. It is my want of longing that makes my want of strength; it is my listlessness that brings my languidness. Create a new heart within me—an eager, beating, bounding heart, a heart vibrating in response to Thy love! Let me feel the passion and the pathos of life, of Thy life! Let me be taken captive by Thy

beauty! Let me catch the spell of Thy loveliness! Let me be thrilled at the sound of Thy footsteps! Let me learn the rapture of hearing Thy name! Let me experience the glow of excitement when the murmur runs round, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!" Then shall the weariness of the heart vanish, then shall the languor of the spirit cease; for the liberty of flight is the Sabbath of the soul. Then we shall mount up with wings as eagles; we shall not faint nor be weary.

GOD'S REST IN MAN.

“The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” —PROVERBS
XX. 27.

THE benighted traveller in the snow has sometimes caught sight of a candle in a shepherd's hut. It has been to him the most joyful of all moments ; it is the promise of rest. Even such, I think, is the thought of the proverb. The man who uttered it knew well the saying of the old book of Genesis, that when God had wandered six days through creation He rested in man. He had been led on by the glimmer of one candle—the light of a human soul. It was the only place of rest the Father saw in all the vast expanse. There was no other dwelling for the spirit of my Father but *my* spirit. He could not find

shelter in any other home. Not "where the bee sucks" could my Father dwell. Not where the bird sings could His heart be glad. Not where the cattle browse could His life repose. Not where the stars shine could He find His household fire. One far-off candle alone gave the sign of home. It was my spirit.

My Father, I have often asked Thee to be *my* light; what a wondrous thought that I once was Thine! I have been Thy candle in the dark and cold; Thou wert moving toward *me*. When the foundation of the earth was laid Thou wert moving toward *me*. When the plant and tree arose Thou wert moving toward *me*. When the breath of life appeared Thou wert moving toward *me*. The sixth morning was the last from Thy *hand*, but it was the first in Thy heart. The candle was more to Thee than the sunlight. Thou wert in search of a light, not brighter, but better than the sun—the sparkle of a human eye, the radiance of a human face; that was the candle that beckoned Thee. It said to Thee through the night, "Come here, and rest!" It offered Thee what all past creation could not offer—

communion. The brightness of the sun could not give it. The beauty of the flower could not give it. The song of the bird could not give it. Thy Sabbath waited for *me*. The bells of the day of rest could not ring till a heart had responded to *Thy* heart, a life to Thy life, a will to Thy will. Thou wert like a dove on the face of the waters till the light in my dwelling appeared. But that candle brought Thee joy—joy unspeakable and full of glory. It was the first sound of home amid the waste of waters—the earliest voice that bore the invitation, “Abide with me!” Ever more, my Father, may I give Thee this welcome home.

THE EDUCATION OF BEREAVEMENT.

“As an eagle stirreth up her nest . . . so the Lord alone did lead him.”—DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 11, 12.

WHAT a startling thought—that the breaking up of the nest is an act of God’s benevolence! I always looked upon it as a calamity. We are all familiar with the experience of the breaking-up of home. We remember the glad circle round the old fire, and how it grew thinner and thinner. One went to the colonies; one went out to be a governess; one departed with a stranger to a house of her own; more than one passed into the silent land. I always thought it a subject for tears. But here is an old writer who makes it a subject for praise, blesses God for it, declares it to be the first step of my education! I can understand God’s love in many things. I can understand why I

should praise Him for His gifts to body and soul. But I lose my breath in surprise when I am asked to make the first stanza of my hymn the adoration of His mercy in loosing the ties of home!

Nay, my soul, it is to *strengthen* these ties that thy Father breaks up the nest. It is not to *get rid* of home He would teach thee to fly. It is that thou mayst learn by travel that thy home is wider than thy nest. He would have thee learn that in thy Father's house are many mansions, of which thy nest is only one. He would tell thee of a brotherhood in Christ which includes, yet transcends, thy household fires. He would tell thee of a family altar which makes thee brother to the outcast, sister to the friendless, father to the homeless, mother to the sick, son to the feeble, daughter to the aged—in kinship to all. Dost thou remember how the child Jesus in the temple lost His parents for a time. It was to Him the first breaking of the nest; it made Him think in His solitude of the wider house of His Father. So is it with *thy* temple, O my soul. Thy parents, thy brothers, thy sisters, leave thee behind;

and in the vacant place there arises a new altar—humanity. Thy Father has given thee wings in the *night*, wings in the breaking of thy ties. Thou hast soared by thy sorrow; thou hast loved by thy loss; thou hast widened by thy weeping; thou hast grown by thy grief; thou hast broadened in being broken; thou hast enlarged thy sympathy by emptying out thy treasures. The storm that shook thy nest taught thee to fly.

ARRESTED EVILS.

“God is our refuge.”—PSALM XLVI. 1.

YOU will distinguish between a refuge and a strength. You stand during a lashing shower under a tree. You are much wet ; but no bad results follow. You say, “I am indebted to my strong constitution.” Yes, my brother, but that should be only the half of your thanksgiving. You are thinking only of the drops which fell and which your strength mastered. Have you ever considered the drops which did *not* fall—the drops which were absorbed by the tree ! That was your refuge, and I think you were most indebted to that. You are right to remember your *strength*, the power to resist the rain ; but should you forget the rain that never came, that was prevented from coming ! Why have you no altars in memory of your

unshed tears, your arrested tears ! Why have you no pillar to commemorate these stones of Bethel on which you did not lie ! Why have you no monument to the spot where you were saved from sacrifice by the ram caught in the thicket ! You have a wreath for your victories ; have you none for your averted battles ! You have a crown for sorrow borne, have you none for sorrow spared ! You have a hymn to the strength ; why not to the refuge also !

Thou Christ of love, who hast borne more than the half of my rain-clouds, let me build an altar to *Thee* ! I have stood beneath the tree of Thy life, and have caught but little of the shower ; the largest drops have fallen on *Thee*. The tree of Calvary has sheltered me. If I had caught the storm's full blast I must have died. But the storm has spent itself on *Thee*, and I live in calm. Thy night has been my day ; Thy struggle has procured my rest. The garden in which I sit was once called Gethsemane ; but it is Gethsemane no more. The sweat-drops that fell from Thy brow have been *dried* for *me*. Thou hast extracted the thorn, and left me only the

rose. The privilege of to-day was the pain of yesterday ; it was purchased by blood—Thy blood. I bless Thee for my shelter under the tree. I bless Thee for the drops that did not reach me. I bless Thee for the tears I have not been forced to shed. I bless Thee for the battles unfought, for the trials untouched, for the sacrifices unneeded, for the lamentations unspoken. I bless Thee that from so many storms I can hide myself in *Thee*.

CRIMINAL REFORMATION.

“Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed.”—HEBREWS XII. 12, 13.

I UNDERSTAND the passage to mean, “It is better to reform the erring than to extinguish them.” There are two methods by which the road may be cleared of the lame—either by turning them out of the way or by healing their lameness. The first is the drastic method. It would purify the air by killing those who are diseased ; it would starve the leper and the Magdalene. The second is the method of Christ ; it would lift up the hands that hang down and reanimate the feeble knees. The first was the world’s method—the Roman’s method. It said of every unpromising tree, “Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground !” But the second said, “Wait

till I have digged round about it; pause till I have tried the effect of a better environment! I would rather have it healed than killed."

Lord of love and beauty, I thank Thee that Thou hast sacrificed the beauty to the love. I thank Thee that Thou hast suffered the barren fig tree to cumber the beauty of the ground; it is a breach of art, but it is a triumph of love. There are many things whose absence would make Thy world more fair. There are tares sown among the wheat, and they mar the glory of Thy field. "Wilt Thou that we go and gather them up?" cry a thousand voices. If it depended on us there would not be one spared. The tares offend our sense of beauty; in the interest of art we would sweep them away. But with Thee there is a deeper interest than art; it is love. Men cry, "Put out the lame from the company of the runners; they spoil the picture!" *Thou* sayest, "Gather them in still more!" Thou surroundest the imperfect with the pure that they may inhale their purity. Thou settest a spiritual child in the midst of the spiritually strong. Thou placest a pos-

sessed soul at the foot of the Transfiguration Mount. Thou sufferest an outcast woman to touch Thee with her tears. All the briars of Thy garden are laid beside the roses. Thou wouldst have beauty to commune with deformity. Thou bringest Judas himself to the farewell feast of love on the chance that he may catch the glow. I bless Thee that Thou hast put art below love. I bless Thee that the symmetry has been sacrificed to the sympathy. I bless Thee that in Thy temple the lame man stands beside the gate of beauty ; it mars the prospect to the eye, but it opens up a prospect to the heart.

THE VALUE OF GOOD CHEER.

“Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.”—
PSALM XXXII. 7.

WHY “*songs of deliverance*” ; why not “deliverance” itself? Because the best way to deliver a man from calamity is to put a song in his heart. There are some who sink under their calamity, and there are some who swim through it. I think you will find that the difference between these lies in the comparative amount of their previous cheer. The balance generally turns on the hearing or not hearing of yesterday’s song. They who have the song already in their heart *pass over* the Red Sea ; they who have heard no previous music are submerged in the wave. We speak of the physical strength for bearing an operation. Are we aware how much of the strength required is *not* physical? I had

a letter lately from one at a far distance. She was about to undergo a severe physical operation. She stated the day and hour when it was to take place. She said she would like at that day and hour to have the knowledge that some one was thinking of her, that some one was praying for her, that some one was, spiritually, holding her hand. She recovered. Will anybody say that the strength by which she bore the strain was purely physical! Will anybody say that the song in the heart went for nothing! In any crisis moment I should say it would turn the scale. Sometimes my physical chances seem equally balanced between life and death. At such moments a previous song in the heart will give the vote for the prolonging of my days.

My Father, compass me with Thy songs! It is not the songs *after* the battle that I ask; my own heart will give me these. What I need is a song before the battle. I can easily get the song of Moses; what I require is the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses came *after* the triumph; it was the pæan of victory. But the song of the Lamb is previous to the

conflict. It was sung ere Gethsemane was entered. It preceded the hour of sacrifice. Before the sweat-drops fell, before the struggle woke, before the perils of the night arose, Thou didst send to Jesus Thy voice from heaven—Thy promise of glory. Thou didst compass Him before the battle with songs of deliverance. He took a light with Him into the valley. Not joyless did He meet the foe. He stood by the warm fire ere He went out into the cold. He felt the pressure of a hand ere He faced the silence. Thy song was with Him in the *night*; it waited not for morning. The flower got into the heart earlier than the thorn, and it deadened the thorn. Be mine this song of the Lamb—this song before deliverance! The song of Moses can be delayed till the conflict is over; but I cannot dispense with that other music—the song *before* the sacrifice—the song of the Lamb!

LOVE'S STRUGGLE AND REST.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ;
. . . . and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the
waters.”—GENESIS I. 1, 2.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ; and there was
no more sea.”—REVELATION XXI. 1.

THESE are quotations from the first and the last chapters of the biography of Divine Love. Nothing can exceed their contrast. The one is Love's winter ; the other is her summer. The one is Love's struggle ; the other is her rest. The one is Love's movement on the waters ; the other is the drying up of her sea. In the one we see Love tossing on the wave, toiling in the dark, working in the void. In the other, Love has reached her haven, secured her sunshine, filled the void spaces with souls at peace. And such, I think, is ever the course of redeeming Love ; it begins with movement, and it ends with

rest. It must have its Genesis before it can make its Revelation. At first its light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. There is a great void in front of it; it puts out its hand, but gets no touch of sympathy. If you want to redeem me, you must begin by taking me as I am—with my darkness and my emptiness. You must not expect me to understand your Revelation. You must at the outset lift my whole cross without one touch of help from *me*. But, when I reach the Revelation of your life, *I* shall lift *your* cross. I shall be eager to lighten your labours, to give you rest. I shall say, "Let thy work be my work!" I shall break through the void to meet you. I shall come to you on the waters—come without being bidden. I shall open to you a harbour in my heart, and you shall repose there.

O Thou who hast been seeking me on the waste of waters, I long to give Thy Spirit rest! Thy love has been long struggling with my lovelessness. There has been nothing responsive in my heart to Thine all through these days of my creation; Thou

hast been walking alone in the depth of the sea. I have been dark to Thy light, empty to Thy fulness, formless to Thy beauty. The cross has been all on one side—Thy side. But now my Genesis is past and my Revelation is come. I have caught a glimpse of what it is *to love*. Hitherto Thou hast been moving and I have been motionless; I would reverse the picture, O Christ. I would take Thy place upon the waters; I would give Thee rest. Thou hast been all the day bearing *my* cross; let me take part in Thine! Let me find a home in my heart for Thee! I often pity the ship that was tossed on the Sea of Galilee; but I seldom remember that Thy feet, too, were on that sea. Help me to remember it; help me never to forget it! Ever let me keep an Ararat for Thine Ark in the flood! Ever in my Bethany let my door be open to receive Thee! Ever in Thine hour of night may it be mine to say, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent!” So shall Thy Spirit *cease* to move on the waters.

PAUL'S LOVE-SONG.

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—GALATIANS VI. 14.

CAN anything make the bearing of a cross glorious? Many things can make a cross endurable; patience can, pride can, despair itself can. But can anything make it a glory? I know of only one thing that can—love! It has been often said that love will go through fire and water for its object. But Paul says a great deal more than that. He says that love courts the fire and water. I think he is right. I believe the morning stage of all love is a craving for the cross. Peter is no abnormal specimen when he cries, “Bid me that I come to Thee on the water!” He has been charged with the love of display; it was really the love of Jesus. All love, secular and sacred, begins

with the cry for martyrdom. The earliest imagination in the heart of love is not that of a gilded palace; it is that of a terrible battle in which it is fighting for its object's life and joy. Its morning picture is the den of lions; its opening fancy is the fiery furnace; its primitive desire is to brave the Sea of Galilee. Its birth-cry is the cry for privation. Its morning note is always, everywhere, a sentiment which has been clothed in words by a Scottish poet and set to the music of a German master:

“ Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee;
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy shield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.”

My soul, thy love for Jesus is but the perpetuation of love's natural morning! There are not two kinds of love. Pure love is like pure water—the same in bay as in mid ocean's deep. Thy love for Jesus is the prolonging of the morning star. Hast thou considered this love-song of Paul's. It is a love-song to Jesus—the oldest in the world. Hast thou

considered how like it is to all pure songs of love. Listen to its music!—"I should glory to be with Thee in the garden; I should revel to be near Thee on Thy cross. Oh that Thy wilderness were mine to share; oh that Thy waters were mine to tread! Meet me in some spot where I can help Thee, in some hour when I can aid Thee! Not under the dome of night where Thou art strong and I am weak—not in the gorgeous palaces where Thou art rich and I am poor, would I meet Thee! But at the Garden gate where still Thou sufferest, on the Dolorous Way where still Thou climbest, in the Bethany churchyard where still Thou weepest, at Samaria's well where still Thou thirstest, in Jerusalem's streets where still Thy heart is broken—I would meet Thee there! Meet me in Thy lane and alley; meet me in Thy garret and hovel; meet me in Thy wards of sickness; meet me in Thy vigils with the sad; meet me on Thy road to the prodigal; meet me in Thy house of the leper; meet me on Thy track of the fallen! My proudest height of glory will be the foot of Thy Cross!"

CHRISTIAN ENFRANCHISEMENT.

“He placed at the east of the garden a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life.”—GENESIS III. 24.

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”—REVELATION II. 7.

CAN a thing be bad on Monday and good on Tuesday! Here is for the same act the issuing of two opposite fiats! The eating of the tree of life was forbidden yesterday; it is to be made allowable to-morrow! Can a thing be wrong yesterday and right to-morrow? Yes, if the change in the day has brought a change in me. Many a fruit is bad for a child which is good for a man. Why? Because the man has overcome something; he has a better constitution than the child. I do not think my Heavenly Father ever forbids a thing merely in order to show His power. We hear a great deal about the *sovereignty* of God. I do not think He ever

acts from the motive of sovereignty. If He forbids one tree out of seven His aim is not regal, but sanitary. The sanitary condition of a place may change in a year; fish may live in a river where they used to die. Prohibition diminishes with moral sanitation. It is quite right to ask, with a certain school, "What would Jesus do?" but I have no right to base it upon "What *did* Jesus do?" God forbids the tree of life to the first man; am I to *follow* in his step of prohibition? No, for God Himself has *reversed* that step for the *coming* man. He has forbidden us to take His prohibition as a *model*. The tree proscribed to-day may be allowed to-morrow. The gate shut to-day may be open to-morrow. The fruit denied to-day may be lavished to-morrow. He who reaches moral health shall dispense with the restrictions imposed on the Paradise of God.

Jesus, it is the steps of Thy *Spirit* I am to follow! It may be that I can serve Thee best to-day by following the opposite route to that of Thy disciples. They had to *give up* the world; the surrender of the world was their burden. But it would no longer be my

burden, O Lord! My temptation is to get away from the tree of daily life—to escape its duties, to ignore its responsibilities. When Thou sayest to me and to Thy first disciples, “Take up My Cross!” both I and they are bound to obey Thee. But my obedience will be the opposite of theirs. Their cross was the giving up of the tree; my cross is the climbing of the tree, the eating of the tree. It is the same spirit, but new steps. Thou art calling me to a larger contact with the world’s tree; but it is not that I may get less of Thy Cross, it is that I may get more. The tree of earthly life has ceased to be bad for me because it has ceased to be selfish. It has become my cross—to be borne for Thee, my weight—to be worn for Thee, my care—to be carried for Thee. Thou hast lifted the *restrictions* to my service. Thou hast enlarged the limits to my burden. Thou hast extended the sphere of my sacrifice. Thou hast given me more room to *deny* myself, more space to spend myself, more field to forget myself. Only to my *love* hast Thou opened the earthly gates; my right to the world’s tree is my power for the world’s cross.

THE UNWRITTEN GOSPEL OF JESUS.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books.”—JOHN XXI. 25.

AND so the Bible is not limited to *our* books! The greater part of the Divine Word has never come down to us, has never been put in writing! To what purpose is this waste! I can overlook such things in *Nature*. I have become accustomed to be told that most of her rays do not reach my eye, and that “of a thousand seeds she often brings but one to bear.” But I expected something better from the Word of God; has God not said that not one word of His should fall ineffectual! Yes, my brother; but where is there any talk about the ineffectual here! There are words of Jesus which never were written; does it follow that their influence

was never transmitted! Thousands heard them; thousands wrote them in their hearts; thousands were redeemed by them; thousands that perhaps had never heard any *other* word of Jesus have handed down an influence received from these! Influences live when their origin is forgotten. You have perhaps lost the memory of your mother; but all the same, she started your spiritual life, and you keep the bias still. Believe me, strange as it may sound, there are thousands of Christians in the world to-day who owe their inheritance to the Lost Gospel of Jesus!

I thank Thee, O Lord, for the record that tells me of things unrecorded; it tells me I must not limit the channels of Thy revelation. Thou hast, even yet, more channels than I know. There are deeds of Thine, there are words of Thine, which were unseen by the eye. The world would not hold the books of unrecorded Christian experience. Thou hast still, with many souls, silent channels of communion—channels where no ships are seen to sail. I see good men around me who do not repair to Thy visible fountain. I should marvel at their goodness

did I not know that Thou hast an *invisible* fountain. Many are bathing *there*—bathing unconsciously. I have seen them come up refreshed, shining. I have said, “Who are these clothed in white raiment, and whence come they?—I have not observed them at the ordinary waters.” And Thine angel has answered me, saying, “These are they who have been taught the things not written in the books. They found a barrier in their mind which blocked their way to the common fountain. They could not get near it; yet their hearts were thirsting for the waters. And the Lord has given them drink by a secret way—a way which they themselves know not—by the spray which is ever sparkling from the ocean of His love. Therefore it is that their faces shine so bright, that their eyes wear so unlikely a gleam. They are the children of the Unwritten Gospel. You have not met them at the fountain; yet they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.”

THE OLD AND THE NEW CONTRASTED.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners.”—PSALM I. 1.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”—MATTHEW V. 3.

TWO voices speak here—the old covenant and the new. Two mountains are before us—Sinai and Hermon. Two psalmists are before us—the man of Israel and the universal Man. Two blessings are before us—the blessing which belonged to the Jew and the blessing which belonged to the Christian. And in these blessings there is yet another contrast. The man on Mount Sinai says, “Blessed is he that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly”; the Divine Man says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” I should have imagined the objects of blessing to have been reversed. Christ seems to take the humbler tone. The

Psalmist of Israel says, "Blessed is the man who lives a perfect life"; Jesus says, "Blessed is the man who feels he cannot live a perfect life." Why does Jesus require less than does the representative of David? The Old Testament insists on a man aiming at perfection; why should the New be satisfied if one can say, "I am a poor creature"?

Because, my soul, that means for thee a higher altitude and a height more hard to gain. It is very easy in the moral world to think thyself at the top of the hill. It is only as thou climbest that the height of the hill appears. It is not the spiritually poor who are the poor in spirit. The spiritually poor are always those who think that they "walk not in the counsel of the ungodly." If thou hast lived all thy life in a village and hast never heard the waves of the human sea, thou art bound to be self-sufficient. Thy stream will be an ocean, thy rustic school an academy, thy rural influence an empire. So is it with the life of thy spirit. Not in thy childhood art thou humble, O my soul; it is contact with the man that makes thee humble. I think the humblest child that ever lived must

have been that child taken up into the arms of Jesus ; it saw its extreme opposite. That child would be poor in spirit ever after. It would be the least boastful of the ring of schoolboys, the least assertive of the family band. Even so, if thou wouldst be humble, must it be with thee. Thou must see Jesus, must be lifted into the arms of Jesus. Only in His arms shalt thou feel thine own nothingness ; only in His presence shalt thou realise thy poverty. Wouldst thou be humble—climb ! Wouldst thou be diffident—soar ! Wouldst thou be modest—rise on the wing ! Wouldst thou beat upon thy breast and say “Unclean !”—get on the mount with Jesus ! Wouldst thou sink in thine own opinion of thy greatness—watch His footsteps on the sea ! Wouldst thou learn the meekness of the dove—in the baptismal waters let thy spirit light on *Him* !

THE STAGES OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

“Have mercy upon me, O God.”—PSALM LI. 1.

“That I may know the fellowship with *His* sufferings.”—
PHILIPPIANS III. 10.

HERE are two degrees of Divine communion, its spring and its summer. The first is God's compassion for *me*; the second is my compassion for God. “Have mercy upon *me*,” says the Psalmist; “Give me fellowship with *Thy* pain,” says Paul. And ever is this the sequence of the soul's approach to God. I begin by asking His fellowship with *me*. It is the cry of my springtime. I have been quickened into pain by the new life within me, and I cry for an anæsthetic. I have been taught my weakness by the moment of convalescence, and I cry for a stimulant. The voice of my spirit in the

springtime is ever the prayer that God will take my cross. But by-and-by summer comes, and the scene is changed. My spirit takes a leap, a bound. I pass from *my* cross to God's cross. I have often wondered why Paul said, "that I may know the fellowship with His sufferings" instead of "His fellowship with my sufferings." But I do not wonder any more. I have learned the difference between spring and summer. Do you not see it even in the life of home! That little girl is laying all her crosses upon the mother; she would be miserable if the mother did not bear them. But, one day, she will be miserable if the mother does bear them. One day, she will want to lift the *mother's* cross. One day, her deepest desire will be to have fellowship with the parent's sufferings, to help *her* burden up the Dolorous Way. And, when that day comes, it will be, both for mother and child, the leafy month of June.

Jesus, I have been admitted to Thy *higher* class of communicants! I stood, one day, upon an eminence of the great city, and looked down. I looked upon its sins and sorrows. I saw the squalor beneath the

glory, the rags below the costly raiment. I beheld the struggle for survival, the weariness of life, the recklessness that breeds crime; and as I beheld, I wept. And then I knew that I was bearing *Thy* cross. Then I knew that I was lifting that old, old burden of Thine—the burden of Jerusalem that made Thee weep. That moment I gained promotion; I passed to the upper form. Hitherto, it had been all receiving; I had never given Thee a joy; I had been the child bringing its cross to the mother. But now there are to be changed times for me, for Thee. Tell me the secret of *Thy* pain; tell me the story of Thy grief! I used only to sing, “Safe in the arms of Jesus”; it is no more for me an adequate song. I cannot sleep if Thou art suffering in the Garden. Rather would I have my arms round Thee in the fellowship of pain! My springtime brought rest to the labour of my heart; but my summer glory will be when my heart shall enter into *Thy* labour.

SELF-REFLECTION.

“The life was the light of men.”—JOHN 1. 4.

It is only in man that life becomes Light—conscious of itself. Every creature has something which it recognises; but man alone recognises life. Everything else looks outside. The bee fixes its eye on the flower; the bird directs its gaze to the plumage of its mate. But man turns the lantern inside and surveys his own dwelling. I am the only creature upon earth that has ever seen the house in which it lives. Bird and beast look out of the window; *I* have the power to turn my back to the window and examine the room. It is not that my house is more wonderful than the other houses. I have always felt that instinct is more marvellous than reason. The house of the bee ought to excite its wonder as much as my house

excites mine. The defect does not lie in the house, but in the tenant. The bee has a mirror as well as I; I see not how, otherwise, it could make its cells. But the mirror in the bee's dwelling has a covering over it; it is a piece of furniture hid from the eye of its possessor. *My* peculiarity is that I have lifted the covering. I have discovered that there *is* a piece of furniture called a mirror. I do not know where the mirror came from any more than the bee does; I do not even know that it is made of different glass from that of the bee. But I do know that, first among the denizens of earth, I have seen my own reflection, and that to me—a product of the eleventh hour, life has become Light.

I thank Thee, O Lord, for the gift of self-reflection. I thank Thee that on creation's sixth morning there was revealed a looking-glass. That looking-glass is Thy most solemn gift to me. It is more solemn than sight, more solemn than hearing, more solemn than the power of motion. In that glass I see what Jacob saw—a man that wrestled with me till the breaking of the day. I am never so shrunk in sinew as when I have gazed into

my looking-glass; the mirror of conscience makes me halt upon my thigh. Often I *regret* that this gift is mine; conscience makes a coward of me. I would fain get back the covered mirror of the bee. I long for the lark's mindless carol, for the nightingale's careless song. I sometimes try to *break* my mirror in the franticness to get free. Do not let me break it, O Lord! Forbid that *other* man to let me go! Tell him to haunt me with his presence! In every un-Christly deed let me *see* myself! In every unholy thought let me confront myself! In every unkind word let me reflect myself! When I do a mean thing, show me that other man! When I slander in secret and have no fear of detection, show me that other man! When the night has hid my sin, show me that other man! Bid him wrestle till my pride is lamed; bid him struggle till my strength is tamed; bid him hold me till my heart is shamed! Whatever other furniture I lose, may I never consent to part with the mirror in my soul!

THE VICARIOUS POWER OF LOVE.

“Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”—
ACTS III. 19.

THE important word here is one which I think has escaped the commentators; it is the little word “from.” What the writer wants is not merely a refreshing sense of Christ’s presence; it is that Christ’s presence may be a centre of radiation—may refresh unrefreshing things. What the writer desires is the imparting of a vicarious glory to things not naturally glorious. Do you know anything which can do that? Do you know anything that can impute its own righteousness to everything else? I know of only one such influence; it is the power of a loved presence. Love has not only a beauty of its own, but a power of beautifying other objects, of refreshing unrefreshing things. Love imputes to all

things its own righteousness. When I am refreshed by the sense that a loved presence is near, the world is refreshed along with me. Nature and I sing together. Not only her great things sing ; her meanest products are glorified. The mosses, the lichens, the grasses, the common turf beneath my feet, are afire and ablaze with thoughts unspeakable. With a loved presence by my side the long way is made short, the muddy way is made clean. Yesterday I walked alone along the road and found it interminable ; to-day a presence is by my side and the journey is too brief. Yesterday I grumbled at the drenching rain ; to-day it is pouring faster, but I am going to the presence of the loved, and I say, "It is but a little shower."

Jesus, Lover of my soul, I ask of Thee more than Thy hymnist asked. It is not enough for me to fly to Thy bosom—to hide there from the rolling waters. I should like the rolling waters to be made *musical* by Thy presence. It is not enough that I should nestle close to Thy beauty. I should like Thy beauty to radiate to the things around me. I often ask the imputation of Thy

righteousness to myself; and it is well. But I want more than that from Thee, my Christ. I want Thy righteousness imputed to many things from which I flee—to all but sin. I want my love for Thee to glorify my world. May Thy presence brighten my environment! Send me love's vicarious joy! Let my gladness concerning Thee put me in spirits all round! From Thy presence may all presences be refreshed! Give the sun a new lustre, the stars a new glitter, the flowers a new glow! Light the prosaic days, the common ways! Illuminate the household drudgery; gild the daily toil! Through every act of mine may Thy love-song be ringing! Through every sight of mine may Thy presence be winging! Through every walk of mine may Thy fountain be springing! Through every night of mine may Thy dear voice be singing! So shall I be refreshed "from the presence of the Lord."

ASPIRATION.

“In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.”—PROVERBS I. 17.

THE common interpretation is, “Even the bird is wiser than you ; you fall into a net of temptation which the bird avoids.” I do not think this is the idea. I take the passage to be a poetic metaphor. I understand it to mean, “You will never avoid the perils of the net until you adopt the *method* of the bird.” What is that method ? It is flight—flight not *from* the net, but above the net. Why does the bird in its progress not try to pass through the net ? Because it has another road open to it—a road through the upper air. If it had only one road it might be tempted to try the net. But it is independent of the spot where the net lies ; it can travel by a more excellent way. The only cure for temptation is

aspiration. You cannot avoid the net by running away from it. The net is really in your heart and runs along with you. You can only avoid it by the wing—by soaring to something better. Are you covetous of earthly riches? You won't escape by shutting the door of the treasury. You will only escape by the sight of a *larger* treasury—the unsearchable riches of Christ. Would you be free from the lust of the flesh; then must you fly on the wings of the *spirit*. To be unhurt on earth you must be a bird of Paradise.

Rise on the wing, O my soul, and in vain the net shall be spread for thee! Rise on the wing, and thou shalt be above the miry clay! Thou shalt not be above it by shutting thyself in a cellar. What makes thee impure is the *thought* of the clay. Thou canst be a pauper and yet a miser, a profligate and yet an ascetic, a worldling and yet a recluse. Thou canst be a prodigal where there are no swine, a Judas where there is no bag from which to steal. Thou fleest not from the world by leaving the street. The world is not in the street; it is in thy study—the place

where thou thinkest. It is thy *spirit* that must have wings. Nothing but a noble love can save thee from an ignoble love—not law, not prison, not stripes, not sight of hell—only the sight of beauty, only Christ. It is not rest thou requirest; it is wing. It is not abstinence thou needest; it is a higher luxury. It is not privation thou lackest; it is a nobler self-indulgence. Not the weaning but the winging of thy spirit is thy God's goal for thee. Begin with the wing! Do not begin with *little* improvements! Do not start with the provinces! Come at once to the metropolis; rise, at a bound, to Christ! And His beauty will keep thee pure; His image will keep thee holy; His loveliness will keep thee aloft upon the mount of virtue. In vain the net is spread for the soul on wing to Jesus!

GOD'S REST AND GOD'S WORK.

"The Lord rested the seventh day."—EXODUS XX. 11.

"Jesus answered, My Father *worketh* hitherto."—JOHN V.
17.

DOES our Lord mean to contradict the statement of the book of Exodus? Exodus says God "*rested* the seventh day;" Christ says, "Up to this present time My Father has never ceased from *labour*." Does Jesus mean to deny the primitive record? No. What He means is that rest is not the opposite of work, but the opposite of friction. And I think our experience must confirm this. Is it not true even of physical rest. It is not motion that tries us; it is the interference with motion. It is not work that makes us weary; it is the impeding of work. If there were no friction in the air or in surrounding objects, you and I would find in the longest and swiftest locomotion a sense of absolute rest. Why does a

little bird grow weary on the wing? Because of motion? No; because of motion interrupted. It is because all things are calling to the bird, "Lie down!" It is because the pressure of the atmosphere is every moment stopping its progress, and saying "You shall not pass here!" If the bird had less friction, it would do more work and at the same time find more rest. When God rested, He rested not from work, but from the friction that impeded work. Are you startled that the working of God should have been impeded by friction! I am quite sure it was, till the birth of a human soul. Do you think that the selfish struggle for survival among the beasts of the field was favourable to the movement of His love! No; it restrained the beating of His wings. It was not the environment for your Father. It was a foreign atmosphere in His own world. It broke the nuptial ring, wherewith He sought to surround all things.

Lord, it is Thy rest in man that has accelerated Thy work. The movement of Thy Spirit is faster than of yore. There are fewer obstacles on the line—love's line. The friction has been lifted from Thy path. Thy rest

is not rest *from* Thy flight, but rest *in* Thy flight. The Sabbath broke not Thy wing, but the impediments to Thy wing. The day of Thy rest has been a day of new travel. Thy message has flashed quicker since the birth of man. The swiftest of all telegraphs has been raised by the rest which *my* heart has given to *Thine*—the telegraph of prayer. Between these points of peace—my heart and Thy heart—there is established a rapid communion. It is quicker than the wings of an eagle, quicker than the sweep of the wind, quicker than the words of a man, quicker than the thought of a soul, quicker than the feelings of a heart, quicker than the aspirings of a spirit. I have no time-measure which can express the rapidness of Thy response to prayer. And it is a rapidness born of rest, a swiftness wrought by sympathy, a flight made fleeter because friction dies. Thy Sabbath morning is Thy working-day.

GOD'S FIRST ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAN.

"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life."—
REVELATION III. 5.

AND so our names are in the book of life already! "I will not blot *out*"—this implies that our names are now *in*. And truly it is so. God begins by assuming that we are sons. He writes our names in His birthday-book before we have a character good or bad. Before the younger brother in Christ's parable became a prodigal he asked and received a portion from his father. His father did not say, "I will wait to see whether you are fit for it." No; he gave it to him in advance—*previous* to his moral trial. There is a thought entertained by some people which to me is awful—that we are put into this world as candidates for God's love. That would be

to start life in absolute darkness ; the morning hour would be my rayless hour. Waiting to be enrolled in the birthday-book of my Father ! waiting at the door till I can prove my right to enter ! waiting in the outer hall till I can establish my claim of ancestry !—it is a deadening, a ghastly thing ! I *refuse* to start life with my Father's love an open question. I refuse to be a candidate for my rightful place in the birthday-book. I refuse to *win by struggle* my claim to the heart of Jesus.

O Christ, I was born in Thy dwelling ; my name was written in childhood in the birthday-book with Thee ! Not rayless was my childhood—not curtailed from Thy love. I have never been a probationer, never been a candidate for Thy heart. I have never felt that I must *win* something if I would win Thee. Such a thought would paralyse me on the threshold. Only by the previous sense of Thy love can I win anything. It is my name in the birthday-book that inspires me. I could not fight on the *chance* of being made Thy soldier ; I could only fight because I am enlisted already. It is by the light of Thy

heaven that I take my journey on earth. It is by Thy star of Bethlehem that I climb the mount of Beatitudes. It is by Thy smile of dove-like peace that I meet the temptations of the wilderness. It is by Thy fellowship in the upper room that I lift with Thee the cross. I need Thee "previous to all things." Thou must be my morning—not alone my afternoon, my effort—not alone my reward, my guide—not alone my goal. Only the lamp of Thy love can lead me to my labours. I shall never breast the battle till I see my name on Thy muster-roll.

IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY.

“In Thy light shall we see light.”—PSALM XXXVI. 9.

“The Lamb is the light thereof.”—REVELATION XXI. 23.

NOTHING is seen in its own light—not even a visible thing. A landscape is not seen in its own light; it is perceived very much in the light of yesterday. How little of what you see is mere perception! Every sight of nature is tinged with the light of memory. The poet looks from the bridge at midnight upon the rushing waters; but what he sees is not the flowing tide; it is a tide of *memory* which fills his eyes with tears. You listen to the babbling of the brook; but what you hear is not the babbling, it is the utterance of a dear name. You visit Rome, you visit Jerusalem, you visit Greece; do you see any of these by its own light? No; they are all beheld by the light of yesterday; *there* is their

glory, there lies their gold! "Even so," cries the Psalmist, "it is with this world; if you want to see it, you must look at it by the light of another world—God's *coming* world." He does not mean that when we quit the scenes of earth we shall have bright light in heaven. It is more than that. It is for the scenes of earth he wants the heavenly light. He says you cannot interpret your own skies without it. We often say that in the light of eternity earthly objects will fade from our sight. But the Psalmist says that until we get the light of eternity earthly objects will never be *in* our sight. It is by the light of the Celestial City—the City which has no need of the sun—that alone we can tell what here is large and what here is small.

Thou Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, Thou art the Light thereof! When God said, "Let us make man!" He meant not Adam, but Thee. Thou art the plan of the great building; to Thee all things move. By no other light can I understand the struggles of this earth. Not by Nature's light can I understand them; I have seen the physical

sunshine sparkle on my pain, and I thought it a cruel thing. Not by philosophy's light can I understand them; I have seen the great thinker impeded by poverty, and I thought it an unseemly thing. Not in beauty's light can I understand them; I have seen the artist lose his eyesight, and I thought it an unrighteous thing. But if the world is being woven for *Thee*, I understand. If Thy type of sacrifice is the plan of the Architect, I understand. If Thy cross is Creation's crown, I understand. If the Celestial City is a home for hospital training, I understand. If Thine angels are all ministering spirits, I understand. If the purest robe is not the white robe but the robe *washed* white, if the goal of man is not Eden but Gethsemane, if the glory of Thy Father is the sacrificial blood of love, then have I found the golden key; in Thy Light I have seen light!

EFFECT OF THE INWARD ON THE OUTWARD.

“When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength.”—GENESIS IV. 12.

THE words were spoken to Cain after he had lost his joy. What connection was there between his sadness and the soil's barrenness? It is not *said* that the soil would become barren. The words are, “It shall not yield to thee its strength.” That really means, “*You* shall not yield your strength to *it*.” When a man falls in spirits, he declines in power of work. The soil was exactly what it was before; but Cain was not what *he* was before. The work which yesterday was easy had to-day become difficult because the mind of the worker was oppressed with care. The deepest changes in outward things are changes in *us*. There

is no such thing as a refreshment-room in nature; there are not certain articles which are warranted to stimulate. The stimulative quality of nature's articles depends on the state of the mind. Many a physical impression which was a pleasure yesterday becomes a pain to-day. Nobody revels more in wood and field than the happy lover; but the lover *unhappy* is offended by that which once made him glad, and cries:—

“ Ye banks and braes o’ bonnie Doon,
How *can* ye bloom so fresh and fair ! ”

It is not that the object has lost its beauty; it is the beauty itself that has palled; less loveliness would be more pleasing. The song which thrilled me in life's morning smites me in life's afternoon. It was the *beauty* that thrilled; it is the beauty that smites. That which makes the difference is in *me*; I have exchanged the bowers of hope for the wastes of memory. The ancient bird is warbling in a new sky, and the vanished sky makes me sad.

My soul, thy rainbow must be renewed from *within*. It has no need of renewal in the heavens; these declare the glory of God

as much as they ever did. It is in *thee* that the flood has come; it is to thee that the promise must be given. If there be a bright colour in thy heart, the old colours in the sky may remain. Hast thou thought of that night when the disciples toiled and caught nothing. After long hours of useless labour, they resolved to go home. Suddenly, a voice said, "Try again!" It was the voice of Jesus. Was there any reason they should try again? Outwardly, none. It was the same sea, the same net, the same boat; what made the difference? A new colour in the heart—Jesus was there. It was not so much because Jesus commanded as because Jesus was there; it was His *presence* made them win. Hast *thou* failed on life's sea; try again—with Jesus! There may be nothing else to bid thee try. The night may be as dark, the waves may be as high, the boat may be as frail; but try again—with Jesus! Try by a new light—an inner light! Try by the light of happiness; try by the glimmer of gladness; try by the lamp of a heart at rest! The most stormy sea may be glassy when the harpers make music thereon.

CHRIST'S INFLUENCE ON GOVERNMENT.

“Kings shall shut their mouths at Him ; for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.”—ISAIAH LII. 15.

THE prophet claims for the coming Christ a distinct originality—“That which had not been told them shall they see.” He says the Christ will announce an idea so original that kings will be struck speechless with astonishment. Nothing shuts the mouths of the critics like originality ; it presents food for deliberation. But why is it *kings* that are to be struck speechless ; why not philosophers ? It is because the new thing in Christ's religion lies, not in the sphere of philosophy, but in the sphere of government. What is the newest thing that Christ told the world ? The Trinity ? The *Brahman* knew

that. The Incarnation? The Greek knew that. The need of sacrifice? The Jew knew that. The Resurrection? The Parsee knew that. The Day of Judgment? The Egyptian knew that. Did Christ say anything which these nations did not know? Yes; and it was something which concerned government. He told the world's potentates that in the coming days the greatest king would be the most burdened servant. No wonder it was *sovereigns* that shut their mouths! It was of them He spoke the new thing. He said that the king, because he was a king, would be the servant of all—not because he was deposed, not because he was subjugated, not because he was the victim of a revolution, but precisely because he sat upon a pinnacle of power.

Son of Man, I have narrowed too much the sphere of Thy Cross! I have thought of it as a thing merely for *other* worlds. A hundred times have I said that religion should be excluded from politics. And yet, the originality of Thy religion is just its making of politics. How little do I realise that the modern type of kingdom is of Thy creation

Why is it that the proudest boast of royalty is to carry the burdens of the people? It is because in the very act of Thy kingship Thou hast borne the Cross. I thank Thee, I praise Thee, I bless Thee, for the bloodless revolution Thou hast made in the thoughts of men! We have not taken captive our kings, to reign in their stead; they have made themselves our captives. They have waked to a new glory—Thy glory. They have seen Thee carrying the world on Thy breast, and claiming the burden *by reason of* Thy royalty. They have caught the sheen of Gethsemane, the glow of Calvary. They have seen the majesty of Thy ministry to man, the regalness of Thy redeeming love, the crown that made Thee crucify Thy soul. They have felt through Thee that love makes debtors of us all—that the highest has to pay, that the greatest has to bear the load. They have learned, they are learning more and more, that on the steps of Thy *Cross* is reached the modern throne, and that only in the sacrifice to a nation's good can they wield the sceptre of the King of Kings.

THE VEILING OF DIVINE AUTHORITY.

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.”—2 SAMUEL XXII. 36.

GENTLENESS is the restraint of *power*. I think the word is often misapplied. I should never dream of applying it to that which is necessarily soft and quiet. Men speak of the gentle brook. Where does its gentleness lie? There is no reserve of power in a brook. It speaks quietly, yet it speaks as loud as it can. It gives out as much as is in it to give. I should never use the term to describe anything which is quiet from weakness. Nature in her summer moods is entitled to the name of “gentle”; we feel she is holding back something. Why do we call a soft breeze “gentle”? Not from what it reveals, but precisely from what it does not reveal—the possibility of the hurricane. Whatever force

at any moment declines to exert its full power is entitled for that moment to the name "gentle." The Bible says God does not exert His full power. It says that if He did there would be no room for you and me. If He put forth His omnipotent will there would be no space for my will; I should then be a piece of mechanism. It is His *gentleness* that makes me great. He refuses to occupy His entire field. He wants *me* to get a margin of it, a corner of it. He will not monopolize the kingdom, the power and the glory. He wants me to get a part in the anthem. He moderates the strength of His own voice just that mine may be heard. He goes behind the trees of Eden's garden just that I may not see Him, just that I may choose unbiassedly between the evil and the good.

My Father, I have heard men say that Thine is not a perfect world. I thank Thee for that which men call imperfect. I bless and magnify Thy name that Thou hast restrained part of Thy power; this gentleness of Thine has made me great. I have heard the complaining of Thy Psalmist, "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself!"

But, to me, Thy hiding has *revealed* something—myself. I could never have felt my manhood if Thou hadst not lowered Thy voice, if Thou hadst not left a space unfilled. Often hast thou seemed to resign Thy sceptre, to let the world trample Thee down. Often have I felt myself alone with the trees of the garden; no thunder came from Thee to say, “Choose that which is good!” But that gentleness, that veiling of Thy lightning, has made a man of me. I have walked to the tree, alone; I have met both vice and virtue; I have given virtue the nuptial ring. I have chosen freely because I did not hear Thy thunder. The sound of Thy thunder would have left me without choice—would have made me mindless; I should have been driven as the stars are driven. But Thy silence has given me speech; Thy reticence has given me revelation; Thy concealment has given me consciousness. Thy rest has roused me; Thy stillness has stirred me; Thy quiet has quickened me; Thy mildness has matured me. I have learned responsibility by the relaxing of Thy hand; Thy gentleness has made me great.

GOD'S BEREAVEMENT.

,"This my son was dead."—LUKE XV. 24.

THE prodigal son had not been dead physically. *We* draw up our list of obituaries on a totally different principle from that on which they are drawn up in heaven. We record the death of the *man*; God records the death of the ideal. There are funeral obsequies which make the angels very sad; but these are generally attended only *by* the angels. We never call a man dead till the life has left his body; God calls him dead when the life has left his soul. There is such a thing as a *Divine* bereavement. We shall never understand its sadness until we know what it is to lose an *ideal*. There is no pain more excruciating than the sense of an ideal lost. We speak of the separations through *physical* death; and they are sad enough. But have you ever thought that

there may be a more effectual separation than either physical death or physical locomotion can bring! When you go away from me either to earthly lands or to the silent land, I still keep your picture in my heart. But what if your picture is *taken out of* my heart! What if it is your *picture*, and not yourself, that is to be buried! What if the beautiful painting of you, which I kept in my soul and for whose sake I loved you, has become ghastly and grim—so ghastly and grim that I have to bury it out of my sight! Will any sense of separation equal *that*! It will be all the sadder because it will be unshared. Nobody will attend the funeral but me. There will be no record in the newspapers. There will be no mourning put on by others. There will be no condolence cards of kind sympathy. There will be no appreciation of why I do not still laugh and dance and play. I shall have to bear the funeral obsequies alone.

Thou Christ of Love, may I never cause Thee this pain! Twice do I read of Thy tears. They were both weepings in bereavement—but in different kinds of bereavement. The one was for the *physically* dead—Lazarus;

the other was for the death of an ideal—Jerusalem. But I think the latter weeping was the sorer. The dead Lazarus brought Thy tears but not Thy words; the dead Jerusalem gave *language* to Thy cry. At that funeral of Jerusalem Thou alone wert present; none but Thyself saw that she was dead. They were all speaking of her glitter and her glory when Thou wert weeping over her grave. It was her ideal that was dead—her picture in Thy heart. I often ask Thee to comfort my hours of bereavement; do I ever try to comfort Thine! I often cry for the raising of my dead; do I ever seek to raise Thine! *Help* me to try, O Lord! I should like to give Thee back *one* prodigal child. I should like to restore *one* buried picture. I should like to revive *one* dead ideal. I should like to plant again in Thy heart *one* flower of former hope. There will be music and dancing in the Father's house when man shall give Thee back Thy dead.

THE INDIVIDUAL'S PLACE IN NATURE.

“He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might ; for that He is strong in power not one faileth.”—ISAIAH XL, 26.

WHAT a singular statement ! I should have expected just the contrary ; it is the contrary sentiment we generally hear. Men are saying every day, “Because He is strong in power you could not expect Him to care for the *individual*.” I once stood beneath the dome of night by the side of a very learned astronomer. He broke into raptures on the vastness of the starry spaces. “In the light of these,” he cried, “what a travesty seems a well-known Christian doctrine !”—he meant the Incarnation. His view was that the power of God was disparaged by being associated with *minute* things. The prophet takes exactly the

opposite view. He says that the vastness of God's power must be *proportionate* to His minuteness. "In the greatness of His might He gives to each thing a separate name; because He is strong in power not one faileth." Which of these views is the correct one? I know which has been truest to experience—the last. So far as experience goes, what has the vast creation been doing all this time? Making an individual—a man. It may have been doing so in *all* worlds; but we know that it has in ours. So far as it meets my eye, creation has been a stepping downwards—from the masses to the man, from the multitude to the unit, from the collective forces to the solitary soul. Each stage has become more separate from the mass. The stair which I descend is a stair of increasing personality—matter, crystal, plant, fish, reptile, bird, mammal, man. At the foot of the stair I stand alone. Wherever I came from—whether created or evolved—at the foot of the stair I stand alone. I have nothing whereon I can rest. I can pluck the flower, but it does not know me. I can rear the bird, but it does not commune with me. I can rule the

beast of the field, but it does not understand me. The latest stroke on Nature's anvil has produced an isolated soul.

I thank Thee that such has been the climax, O God! No longer, in such a knowledge, can I look at the stars and say, "What a travesty they make of Christ!" In the light of this climax, it becomes all fit and seemly that a *man* should be my hiding-place from the storm, a *man* my covert from the tempest. Nevermore let me feel my insignificance before Thee! Nevermore let me sneer at a special providence! Help me to see that all Thy providences have been tapering downward—from the dayspring to the dust! That dust of which Thou saidst, "Let us make man," is Thy *gold* dust; Thy closing work has been Thy climax work. Fearless I stand below the stars. Dauntless I survey the depths of night. Untrembling I behold the wonders of the telescope; for the *microscope* is the climax of Thy glory, and Thine audience chamber is the lowest room.

THE TWO CREATIONS.

“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth.”—EXODUS XX. 11.

“If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation.”—2 CORINTHIANS V. 17 (R.V.).

THE narrative of the first chapter of Genesis repeats itself, I believe, in the sphere of the Spirit. It is a revelation of how God *always* creates. What the Divine Spirit did when it brooded on the face of the waters it is doing again when it broods over the chaos of the soul. There were six days of the natural creation. On the first, the Spirit *moved*. On the second, the distant firmament appeared. On the third, there was silent growth. On the fourth, there was a division of times. On the fifth, there was the life of instinct. On the sixth, there was the life of reason. So, methinks, is it in the *new* creation—Christ’s

re-creation of the soul. There, too, I recognise six mornings—and they repeat the first six mornings. The Spirit begins by simply moving—quickenings into life. Then comes the sense of distance—the firmament; I begin to feel that I am in a far country. Then follows a stage of silent growth—the *plant* life of the soul. Next, there is a division of time—certain days are set apart as sacred days. Then break forth the impulses of religious emotion—the Divine instincts of the heart by which it pants for the waterbrooks. At last, faith becomes reason; religion runs through all my life, and permeates every pore; God says to the Spirit, “Let us make man!”

Lead me up the stair, O Christ—the stair of Thy new creation! Step by step let me rise—from the movement to the man! Doubtless there will be moments of gloom—moments when I seem to make no progress. The quickening of Thy Spirit will give me pain; the distance of Thy firmament will make me humble; the silence of the underground growth will cause me to say, “I am falling *back*.” But ever as I climb let me see the

climax! Help me to remember it is the ascent to *man*, nay, to the Son of Man—to Thee! When the struggling Spirit pains me, let me remember I am mounting to *Thee*! When the distant firmament appals me, let me remember I am mounting to *Thee*! When the slow growth disconcerts me, let me remember I am mounting to *Thee*! Ever as I ascend, let me see in the east Thy star! My week of days must needs be a *Passion* Week. The darkness and the voidness and the chaos have long had possession of the field; they cannot be dispossessed without my pain. Not even the special religious seasons of my fourth day will dispossess them; I want religion for *all* my days, for all my hours, for all my moments. But I shall find it in Thee. My Sabbath rest is coming at the top of the stair. There I shall meet the day without an evening. There shall my worship be an eternal service. There shall every house be a temple, every deed a sacrament, every thought a depth of devotion. Thou hast said from the beginning, "Let there be light;" but I shall only *see* the light when I reach the top of the stair.

MAN BLESSING GOD.

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul.”—PSALM CIII. 1.

WE commonly begin our prayers with a request that God will bless *us* ; the Psalmist begins his prayer by calling on his soul to bless *God* ! The eye of the heart is generally first directed to its own desires ; the eye of the Psalmist's heart is first directed to the desires of God ! It is a startling feature of prayer, a feature seldom looked at. We think of prayer as a mount where man stands to receive the Divine blessing. We do not often think of it as also a mount where God stands to receive the human blessing. Yet this latter is the thought here. Nay, is it not the thought of our Lord Himself ! I have often meditated on these words of Jesus, “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ! ” I take them to mean : “ Seek ye first

the welfare of God, the establishment of His kingdom, the reign of His righteousness ! Before you yield to self-pity, before you count the number of the things you want, consider what things are still wanting to *Him* ! Consider the spheres of life to which His kingdom has not yet spread, consider the human hearts to which His righteousness has not yet penetrated ! Let your spirit say, ' Bless the Lord ! ' Let the blessing upon God be your morning wish ! It is not your *power* He asks, but your wish. Your benediction cannot sway the forces of the Universe ; your Father can do that without your prayer. But it is the prayer itself that is dear to Him, the desire of your heart for *His* heart's joy, the cry of your spirit for His crowning, the longing of your soul for the triumph of His love. Evermore give Him this bread ! "

Lord, take *my* blessing on *Thy* labours ! Take my prayers for the harvest—*Thy* harvest ! I often give Thee prayers for mine. But I would remember that Thou, too, hast a sowing time and a waiting time. I would remember that Thou hast committed Thy seed to an uncertain soil—the soil of my heart. I

would remember that between Thy spring and Thine autumn there are many blasting gales, many blighting influences. I would sing a new song to Thee this day. All the old songs have had one refrain, "Lord, send my harvest-home!" But the song I would now sing is of higher strain; and the rhythm of its music is this: A good harvest to *Thee*, O Lord! May earth grant Thee Thy heart's desire! May the wings of Thy love be untrammelled! May the flight of Thy hope be unfettered! May the sweep of Thy grace be unhampered! May the power of Thy peace be unimpeded! May the reign of Thy righteousness be unchequered! May the joy of Thy presence be unbroken! May the light of Thy countenance be unsullied! May the music of Thy voice be unmuffled! May the sway of Thy Spirit be unceasing! These are my morning wishes—my burden of blessings on *Thee*.

GOD'S PRESENCE IN DEATH.

"If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there."—PSALM CXXXIX. 8.

WHAT a strange spot for the presence of God—Sheol, the place of the dead! I could understand His presence in every other spot. If I ascended up into heaven, I should expect, like the Psalmist, to find it *there*. If I rose on the wings of the morning, I should expect to find it there. If I launched on the great sea, I should expect to find it there. Even in the hour of night I can understand His presence, for my night is the day of another hemisphere. But the place of the dead—how can God be present here! Is not God life, eternal life, exhaustless life! How can eternal life claim a spot for its presence *here*! Is there anything in God's nature which makes it possible for Him to unite

with such an empty thing as death? Yes; the very essence of His nature does, for that is love. There is nothing so like death as love. Love is the passing of my life into another life. I think the most complete death that ever took place took place in heaven. We speak of dying as a going to heaven from earth. Paul says that the most complete death ever seen was a coming to earth from heaven. He says that the greatest transition of life ever made was where Love, "though in the form of God, yet emptied itself, and took the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man." In the light of such a thought, who shall say that the valley of the shadow is to God a foreign soil!

My Father, men have thought to honour Thee by excluding Thy presence from the dark valley; I have heard them say, "I shall be ushered after death into the presence of the Lord." Nay, not "after." That would mean that in the act of dying I am *without* Thy presence. I could not bear that; it would add to death a new terror—the greatest terror of all. Art Thou to be away from

me in my one hour of absolute weakness! Who is to lead me across the flood if Thou art not there! An angel? I would not trust him; he knows less about death than Thou knowest. He has less experience of such a transit because he has less love. I shall decline the escort of an angel; I shall decline the escort of any guide who has no experience of the flood. Come Thyself, Thou Immortal Love, that art yet immortal by dying! Come Thyself and bear me across the stream! Thou hast sounded the stream; Thou hast proved that life can be immortal after self-forgetfulness—can live in the servant's form when the regal form has been discarded. No experience of the valley is so near to me as Thine. Come Thyself to me in the valley! Send away Thine emissaries! Dismiss the angel guides that essay a depth beyond their strength! Call back the unpractised hands from the brink of the stream, and stand Thyself upon the bank to comfort me! I would not taste of death till I have seen *Thee*!

RELIGION AND SOLEMNITY.

“ Perfect love casteth out fear.”—I JOHN IV. 18.

THE fear here spoken of is that produced by solemnity. St. John says that the sense of religious solemnity declines as religion deepens, until love becomes perfect—when it vanishes altogether. This is not the common view. The common view is that the idea of God is essentially the most solemn thought in the world. How often do you speak of the solemnity of meeting God ! You advocate the preparation for death on this ground. You look upon the physical forces of the world as *devoid* of solemnity—as things you can meet every day without a sense of mystery and without a touch of awe. But to meet God ! to meet the Author of your being !—that you feel to be an awful thing, a thing not to be accomplished readily. Now, this is not my opinion. The idea of God is, to

me, the least solemn thought in the universe. It may sound startling to say so; yet I feel that my sentiment is founded in reason. I have more relation to God than to any object in Nature—just because he *is* the Author of my being. I know more about *Him* than I do about anything surrounding me; above all, I know that He comprehends *me*. I am an agnostic about everything else. I am an agnostic about matter, and therefore I am very solemn in its presence. I do not understand it, and I am quite sure it does not understand me. What does the sun know about me! what does the tree know about me! I am a foreigner to them; they are foreigners to me. But God is related to me; God is allied to me; God is my Father. He is the only presence that is not a mystery to me, that does not make me feel awe-struck. My hour of solemnity is my hour in the temple of Nature!

And I come to Thee, my Father, to get that solemnity removed. I come to Thee as the only being who can lift my solemnity from surrounding things. I want *one* friend in the world—one whom I know, one who knows

me. I want someone who will lead me through the mystic labyrinth of the things of sense, and make me feel less strange in the world. When I stand below the stars without Thee I say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" Take away the dread, my Father! Light this solemn world with Thy smile! Dispel with Thy voice the solitude I feel! Guide me amid the things I know not, the things that know not me! It is not death I am afraid of; it is life—life without *Thee*. Life without Thee is too solemn, too awful, too weird a thing. I must hear a familiar voice if I would brave unfamiliar forms; only *trust* can stop my trembling, only love can cast out fear. There is no place prepared for me in Nature's mansions till I have met Thy Christ. The Beautiful Gate of the Temple is *too* beautiful without *Him*; I lie lame and impotent before it. Show me a warm fire within—love's fire, heart's fire; and in that hour the solemnity will pass away, and I shall walk through the Beautiful Gate "leaping, and praising God!"

THE BETHLEHEM OF THE HEART.

“Until Christ be formed in you.”—GALATIANS IV. 19.

THE formation of Christ in the heart is the birth of Christ in the soul. Paul says that Bethlehem is repeated in each Christian life. Christ begins in the heart as He began in the world—as a child, as an undeveloped form. Very like the birth at Bethlehem is the birth in the soul. There comes into the life a thing as yet inarticulate, and with no language but a cry. It comes into the midst of adverse influences. It does not wait till the ground is clear, wait till the man is reformed. No; it enters the house while it is still only a manger. It lies down beside the original tenants—the beasts of the stall. It is born while yet Herod is king. Herod is ever at war with its birth, would fain kill it. The infant Christ within me is opposed by the

full-grown selfishness within me; they are contrary, yet they live awhile in my heart together. Small as the infant Jesus is, it troubles the full-grown king. That little thing I call my conscience makes a complete coward of the Herod within me. It has a still small voice and Herod has a very loud one; yet it is Herod that trembles, not Jesus. The most hopeful thing about the old king is *just* his fear of the infant Jesus. There must be a flaw in his selfish armour when he is afraid of a tiny babe. That infant is, outwardly speaking, the most impotent thing in the kingdom; yet Herod fears it more than all the legions. He says, "If only this child would die I should have peace!"

So thou wouldst, my selfish heart; therefore He will *not* die. This child of troubling voice is a Christmas gift to thee. The first gift from thy Father is a present of pain. I have read that an angel came down to trouble the waters; the infant Christ is that angel. He seems a powerless life amid the beasts of the stall. But there are strange songs around Him prophetic of coming glory, strange gifts beside him predictive of future riches.

It is by the songs, it is by the gifts, I know that Christ is born in thee. Thy songs are above thine environment; thy gifts received are beyond thy position. Why is it that after the work of a selfish day there come to thee as to Jacob voices through the casement window—voices whose burden is the message, “Glory to God in the Highest”? Why is it that there come to thee aspirings after the good, cravings for something white, longings for something pure; how could such gold and frankincense and myrrh get into thy manger? Why is it that when seeking only money there glitters a star before thee—a star which fills thy sky and will not be extinguished? It is because a new presence has dawned within thee; Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

THE BURDEN-BEARERS.

“ He gave wagons unto the sons of Merari ; but unto the sons of Kohath he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.”—NUMBERS VII. 8, 9.

THERE are two sets of men in this world—the sons of Merari and the sons of Kohath—the men who have wagons and the men who have none. It is very much the distinction between the labouring and the heavy-laden. The men who have wagons are the world's *active* souls. They have their own share of griefs, but they have influences that can lift them. They have to go out to their daily work. They have to visit the exchange. They have to transact buying and selling. In a time of grief this necessity may be a pain, but it is also a cure. The rolling wheels of worldly labour carry away one-half the burden from the sons of Merari. But with

the sons of Kohath it is very different. These are the *passive* souls of life. They have no wagons, no influences to divert them from their grief; they carry it all on their own shoulders. They are incapacitated from outward work; they have to stay at home. And because they have to stay at home they are the victims of self-reflection; their sorrow turns in upon itself. The sons of Kohath seem the less heroic, but they are really the most to be pitied. They can do nothing to lift their burden, nothing to make it lighter to the household. They are themselves an additional burden to the household; the most that can be expected of them is to suffer and not cry.

Ye sons of Kohath, I have a message for you; I bring you good tidings of great joy! Have you ever marked these words: "The service of the sanctuary belonging to them was that they should bear upon their shoulders." "The service *belonging* unto them"—that is a grand thought, a thought that may well lift one-half of your burden! During these days of prostration you are not wasting your time, you are not wasting God's time. You are finishing the actual

work which your Father has given you to do. You have been always lamenting that your work has been postponed. You have been crying from morn to eve, "If some one would only lift this load from my shoulders, I would do my part in the world." Nay, ye sons of Kohath, *this* is your part in the world, this is the service which "*belongs* to you." You have not been shunted from the line, God's line. In the sanctuary of the Lord "they also serve who only stand and wait." Nay, I will go further; I will say, "They also serve who only lie down and are waited *upon*." Think you that the sick do no work for the healthy! They present the very food on which charity lives and breathes. The sons of Merari would be poor creatures without you sons of Kohath; their sympathies would starve, their pity die. Lift up your eyes, and behold your place in the universe of God! To you the heart owes its fountains of compassion. By you is stirred the pulse of human tenderness. In you is nourished that ministrant river whose streams make glad the city of God. Magnify your office, ye sons of Kohath!

THE LATENESS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

“Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”—ISAIAH XLVIII. 18.

Is my religion, then, to have a widening process as I go! I am told that my peace is to be only as a river, but that my righteousness is to be as the waves of the sea. I should have expected the reverse. I should have thought that the widest stage would be the opening stage—that the waves of the sea would have come first, and the river afterwards. I should have judged that many things would be permitted to the beginner which would not be allowed to the adult. I should have deemed that liberty would have been greatest in the morning and most curtailed in the afternoon. The prophet says it is just the opposite—in the morning I have

fetters on; in the afternoon I am free. The simile of my afternoon freedom is the broad sea with its bounding waves and its buoyant breezes. It is generally the simile for *youth*. We think of the ship of life as being launched into an element where care is not yet known, where nothing is seen but the expanse, where the waters seem to touch the sky. We look to the banks of the river as something which will come afterwards, something which will break our dream. But here the expanse is for old age—Christian old age. Here the boundlessness is for the adult—not the youth. Here the ocean breezes are for the autumn—not the spring. Here the wonders of the deep are for the grey—not the gold. Here the freedom of the wave is for the man of the setting sun—not the child of the dawn.

Jesus, let me stand where the harpers stand—upon Thy sea! I am weary of being restrained by the river banks. I am weary of being denied the full freedom of Thy worldly field. It is because the worldly field is Thy field that I want the liberty to use it. I feel I could extend Thine empire—make more room for Thy cross. There are a thousand

things dedicated to selfishness which I long to dedicate to *Thee*. Why are Thy churches so eager to debar me from worldly places! We often put flowers on Thine altar; I should like to put Thine altar among flowers. It grieves me that there should be garnered for Thee none of life's *beautiful* things. We give Thee the grim but not the gay, the ghastly but not the glad, the roughness but not the roses, the trembling but not the transport. We bring Thee the dirge but we keep the dance. We offer Thee the mourning but we retain the mirth. We present Thee with the sigh but we withhold the singing. We invite Thee to the funeral but we bar Thee from the feast. We ask Thee to the wringing of hands but not to the ringing of bells. We call Thee to our flow of tears but not to our overflow of spirits. We summon Thee to the breaking of the heart but not to the breaking of the day. No wonder I am eager to stand upon Thy sea!

THE RENEWAL OF MORNING.

“The glory of the Lord came into the house, by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.”—EZEKIEL XLIII. 4.

THERE are some places which catch the morning and some which catch the evening sun. There are gates which look toward the east, and there are gates which look toward the west. When life fronts the west, it is contemplating old age; when life fronts the east, it is contemplating youth. When Christ enters the temple of the heart, we have always an eastern prospect. It does not matter how old we are or how dilapidated the temple; the moment Christ enters the prospect is eastern. The first cry of every Christian is to get back to the morning. What do you mean by the prayer to have your sins forgiven? It is simply the cry to re-tread your past—to go back to the morning sun. Why do you not

merely say, "Let the dead past bury its dead; I will try to live better in the future"? It is because you want not simply a golden west, but a golden east—not merely a fine evening, but a retrieved morning. *That* is why you cry for the expiation of the past. You want to have the sense of beginning again, of being a child again. You want to feel, not merely that there are no blots on your present page, but that there are no blots on your past page. Nothing causes you to blot the new page like the memory of blots on the old. You seek a fresh start—a morning prospect, a window toward the east, a view of the rising sun; nothing else will give you a sense of glory.

My brother, in *Christ* this glory may be yours! Other masters can promise you a golden *west*. Other masters can point you to the hope of a new day when this day has closed; but they all leave the present day in the blackness of darkness; none point you back to a retrieved *morning*. Jesus does; He offers to rekindle your *east*. He promises to wash your past blemishes away, to erase the blots from the page of yesterday. He offers to make your badness work for good—to lift

the stumbling-blocks you have left upon the highway, and make them the stepping-stones of man. That, my brother, is your prospect of glory—an eastern prospect, a morning prospect. Go forth to meet it! Go forth with youth's elastic step! There is a step which belongs only to the feet on the threshold; there is a lightness of tread which beginners alone can possess. It may be yours this day. However old, broken, shaken you be, it may be yours this day—*shall* be yours if you will it. For you the kindling east once more is waiting. For you the star of Bethlehem once more is shining. For you the garments of a child once more are weaving. For you the race of life once more is opening. A second baptism is before you; a new name will be given you; the blood of a higher birth will be the starting of your day. You will retrieve the waste of the vanished years; your glory is coming from the eastern gate.

THE SUBORDINATION OF CHRIST.

“God sent forth His Son, made under the law.”—GALATIANS IV. 4.

THE idea is that Jesus never used His full freedom. He observed the religious ordinances of His day. He went to church. He had no need to go to church. He was in direct communion with His Father. He must have felt the temple services to be altogether inadequate, obstructive to the emotions of His heart. It was like a great author reading the work of a very poor author. Yet Jesus was willing to read books. He asked to be baptized. He had no need to be baptized. Baptism was for the cleansing of sin; He had no sin to be cleansed. But He saw the crowd go down to the river, and He resolved to go with them. He wished from the very outset to

identify Himself with that which was beneath Him. That river of baptism was for Him the river of God's pleasures, because it was a source of mental sacrifice. He was above it, had no need to bathe in it. But the people had need. He refused to separate from the people, to be thought of as separate. He insisted on serving during the same hours prescribed for their working-day. He would wear their badge. He would use their implements. He would carry a burden equal to theirs. He would do the same amount of work. He would serve for the same length of time. You will always find Jesus occupying an inferior room to that which He has a right to possess.

My brother, have you considered this field for the imitation of Christ! It is rather a novel field. We often point to Christ as an incentive to fly upward; here we meet Him as an incentive to fly downward. You have moments of spiritual exaltation in which you feel yourself to be lifted above the crowd. You say, "I do not need to go to church; I have a Bible in myself; I have communion with God on the hillside; I have infinitely

more light on sacred subjects than the poor creature who occupies the parish pulpit to-day." Very likely you have. But did it never strike you that there are times in which you ought to accept *less* light than your own! Did it never occur to you that the people may not be ready for the *degree* of your light, that a less amount may be essential to them! If it be so, then, my brother, you ought to step downward. Jesus stepped downward—downward into that Jordan which was below Him. You must follow Jesus. You must share the burden of those who are beneath you. It will not do for you to send the lame man into the pool of Bethesda while you remain on dry land. You must go down with him. You must let him feel that you are his companion in tribulation. You must not let him disparage the water in which he is bathing. He *will* disparage it if you keep away, if you stand loftily upon the bank and survey him from afar. The disparagement will impede the cure. Come down, my brother; come down into the stream!

THE PLACE OF FAITH IN RELIGION.

“They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee, for Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.”—PSALM IX. 10.

AND so faith is not the opposite of reason! I used to think it was. I used to think it was a blind impulse. The Psalmist says it is founded on experience. “They that know Thy name” means “They that know Thy fame”—Thy reputation for cures—the number Thou hast healed in the past. Faith is not credulity. It is built, says the Psalmist, on the law of averages—on a study of the census, “Thou hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.” We shall never get a living faith until we get back that view. We rest our faith on the *command* of God; we should rest it on the name of God—on the fame of God. The hypnotist puts a man into a sleep, and says, “Believe whatever I tell you!” And

the man does. But we all deem him weak, and few of us would like to be thought that man. Nor should I like to be thought that man, even though the hypnotist were God Almighty! I should be ashamed to be converted so unscientifically, and Christ would justify my shame. I have read of the men on Transfiguration Mount that "when they were awake they saw His glory." Ah! there it is—when they were *awake*. He often gives His beloved sleep—often gives them hypnotic sleep—rest by the mere act of gazing. But in no hypnotic sleep does He exact, would He accept, an act of *faith*. It is from my waking soul, from my reasoning soul, from my prudent and poising and pondering soul that He values the expression of my faith.

Son of Man, I did not come to Thee by the gate of faith; I came to the gate of faith by Thee. Men said to me, "Believe and live!" I said, "Live, and believe!" I learnt at school that faith was the root, and knowledge the flower; I have learned by experience that knowledge is the root and faith the flower. They told me that faith was the spring-time, the seed-time, the stage of the simple be-

ginner. I have found that it is the latest phase of growth—the very *summer* of the soul. My faith was born of sight—born of experience. I did not first believe and then come; I came and then believed. I kept *near* Thee before I knew Thee; I knew Thee before I believed in Thee. It was first the look, then the learning, last of all, the love, and faith the wing of love. Not in the darkness have I soared to Thee, O Christ! Not by a blind impulse of the heart have I flown to Thy bosom! Mine has been not only the wing, but the eye, of an eagle; I have seen where I was going, I have known in whom I have believed. My wing has been love's wing. My flight has not been in the winter; it has been prompted by green leaves. My soaring has not been in the midnight; it has been tempted by the morning sky. My faith is born of love, and my love is born of light, and my light is born of experience, and my experience is born of nearness; these are the golden steps on which I mount to Thee.

CHRIST'S UNFINISHED WORK.

“Jesus commanded that something should be given her to eat.”—MARK v. 43.

IT is the daughter of Jairus that is spoken of. Jesus has restored her to life; He now commends her to ordinary human care. It was not enough that life had come back. It had come back in a state of vacancy. It had to be filled, replenished, invigorated. The regeneration was only a part of the process. The damsel had been raised; Christ commanded that she should be fed. Is there not something strange in this narrative! Why should not Jesus have done the whole work Himself! If He could bring back life, why bring it back vacant! Why not restore it in its summer bloom! If I repair your watch and give it back to you, do I not, before returning it, put it to the right hour! Why

does Jesus give back this maiden in a state so worn and dilapidated? It is that *you* and *I* may have something to do. Have you ever thought of these words of Paul, "I fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ." In spite of His sympathy with human sorrow, Christ left something behind, something unfinished. Why? Because He wanted *you* to have a stone in the temple. It would be a very easy thing for Him to give the daughter of Jairus food as well as life; personally, He would *prefer* to do so. But, as Paul says, "Jesus Christ pleased not Himself." He restrained Himself in the thing He delighted in. He wanted you and me to be sharers in the joy of doing it. He did not wish to monopolise the joy. Therefore He left each work unfinished. He sent back Lazarus in his grave-clothes. He made the restored leper seek ceremonial cleansing. He recalled to earth the daughter of Jairus in the condition of a famished child.

I thank Thee, O Christ, for the parts of Thy work which are left behind. Thy pleasure would have been to finish them; the impulse of Thy heart prompted Thee to complete the

cure. But Thou hadst a care for the impulse of *my* heart. If Thou hadst done all, there would have been no object for my pity. My pity would have died for want of exercise. It would have met the fate of the fish in Kentucky's cave that have lost their eyes through disuse. I should be as sad to lose my pity as to lose my eyes; it would lower me more. Thou hast averted from me this calamity. Thou hast refused to put my pity in the cave. Thou hast left a part of Thy work unfinished. Thou hast left it for *me* to do, that my pity may not die. I see the daughter of Jairus less cured than she *might* have been—less cured than she *would* have been but for Thy love to *me*. I see her alive but not vigorous, waking but still in want. Thou hast given her body a spirit eternal, but Thou hast clothed it in a mean robe temporal; Thou hast been lavish of the gold but saving of the brass. I bless Thee that Thou hast not been lavish all round; it has left a margin for *me*. Help me to feed the lives whom Thou hast sent hungry to my door!

THE CHILD JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS.

“They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”—
LUKE II. 46.

HAD Jesus, then, something to *learn* about God? Yes; the imperfect way of reaching Him. The bird has a perfect way of reaching the top of the mountain—it can rise on the wing. But it would never be able in its present nature to reach the top of the mountain in our *imperfect* way—the mode called climbing; it would need to *learn* that. Jesus could reach the Father on the wing—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. He could mount by a flight of intuition to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens — could soar instantaneously into the secret place of the Most High. But to climb into that place as we do, to *moderate*

the pace in reaching God, to *walk* to the spot to which He was wont to *fly*—this was a hard thing, this had to be learned. Jesus and the doctors had both approached the Father; but they had travelled in different vehicles. Jesus had flown on the wings of an eagle; the doctors had ascended in a stage-coach, with many halts by the way. Jesus wished to learn the slow mode of conveyance which the doctors had. He could only learn it by travelling *with* them awhile. He came into their temple to practise their method. Very likely He found it arduous work, more arduous than you would have found it. For one accustomed to the wing the travelling by land must be irksome. But the doctors of the earthly temple travel by land; therefore Jesus said, “I will do so too.”

And yet, Thou Child-Jesus, methinks the doctors learned more from Thee than Thou didst from them. When I study in the temple of earth amid the doctors, what I need most is a glimpse of *Thee*. I am always in danger of forgetting the instincts of the child. I pride myself on the evidences of my toil—of my long climbing. I point to the tear and wear the journey has cost me—to the weary

feet, to the soiled garments. I magnify the laborious tread of my reason ; I pity the ease of the child's movement on the wing. And yet, if I could get the child into my temple, I should travel better. If I had more faith, my reason might be less laborious, but it would be more clear. Bring the child into Thy temple courts, nay, come Thyself into these temple courts, Thou Child-Jesus! Stand again among the doctors of *our* day, and ask the questions which belong to opening life! Stand again among the doctors with the freshness of morning's glow! Show them the vision of the dawn! Bring to their remembrance the faith at a mother's knee! Recall to them the memories of home! Remind them of youth's enthusiasms! Revive in their hearts the image of things once consecrated—of the old church, the old Sabbath school, the old group that gathered round the family altar! Plant anew the seeds sown in their Bethlehem ; nay, clear away the accretions, and they will find that the seeds have never ceased to grow! The Temple of Science will be beautiful when it has numbered among the doctors a Child-Jesus.

THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN AMBITIONS.

“Those that seek Me early shall find Me.”—PROVERBS
VIII. 17.

To seek God is a very bold aim, the greatest aim that marksmen ever took. The command to take that aim *early* is a paradox. We do not teach a beginner to aim at things very far off. We set before the child an ideal within reach of his arm. We go on the principle that our power to hit the mark will grow from less to more. But the principle here is just the opposite. God's rule is, “Let your earliest aim be at the highest—at Myself!” He says that to be a successful marksman one should try first to hit the farthest heights. The first object of a child's moral imitation should be not the human but the Divine, not his companions but his God ;

his *highest* aim should be his *earliest*. And, indeed, I think experience will bear out this view. I do not think an inferior form of beauty so fitted to stimulate a beginner as a superior form. Sunlight will always be more stimulating than candle-light. If I want to waken a child's admiration I would rather direct him to the glow of the morning than to the gleam of the gas. I would make him begin at the *top* of the ladder. I would point him to God, before all things. I would tell him to fix his eye first on the Absolute Beauty. I would direct him on the threshold to the flawless, peerless. I would lead him, not into the outer court of the temple, but into the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine where the Highest sits supreme. I would let Him descend from God to man, not ascend from man to God.

My soul, aim first at the skies! Do not begin with anything near the ground! Do not say, "I will start low, and accustom myself gradually to the height!" Point thine earliest arrow for the farthest flight. Seek God in Thy *morning*! Let no *finite* model be thy guide to heaven; follow Christ!

Measure not thy standard by Plato, by Socrates, by Moses ; follow Christ ! Take not thy pattern from angel or archangel, from cherub or seraph ; follow Christ ! Say not, "I will try to imitate one whom I can reach ; one who is not too far beyond the stretch of my hand !" Imitate the *unreachable* ; follow Christ ! Thou shalt never reach thy goal—not in myriad flights of thy wing ; He will ever be before thee. But that will be thy glory. Thine will be an *eternal* model. It would be no glory to come up to thine ideal. Aspiration would die ; the wings would lose their power of flight—thy strength is the unattainableness of thy goal. Men speak of the everlasting hills ; what thou needest is rather an everlasting climbing—a hill whose summit thou canst see, but canst never gain. Christ is that hill of holiness. His summit will be as far from thee at evening as at morning ; but the climbing is itself the goal. They that seek *Him* will find an eternal forerunner ; seek Him early, O my soul !

THE RETROSPECTIVE REVELATION.

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”—ISAIAH XXX. 21.

IMAGINE you were told that a revelation from God was about to be given you, and that you must keep your eyes alert for its coming, you would begin to look in different directions. You would first look above to see if there was any sign of an opened heaven. Then you would look in front in search of a premonition of the future. Then you would “turn to the right hand, and to the left”—to read the traces of a present Providence. But there would be one direction in which you would never dream of turning; you would never think of looking “behind you.” You would say “I have been over all that road already, and have *not* heard a voice from God.” And

yet the prophet says that this rejected quarter is to be the favoured spot of revelation. Not from the sky, not from the future, not from the passing scene, is the revelation to come. It is to come from the past—from the road you have already traversed. At the very moment when you are looking to the right hand and to the left you will hear a voice “behind you,” and its message will be: “This is the way, walk ye in it.” What is this voice that comes from so unexpected a quarter? It is conscience. Conscience is ever the voice “behind you.” It does not *accompany* your deed of sin; it comes when you have left your sin in the background. You only hear it when you are half-way up the hill. You do not meet it in your valley—in your actual badness. It reaches your ear when you have begun to climb. It does not echo your strain of blasphemy, but your song of purity. The memories of conscience are only stirred under the shadow of the hill of God.

My soul, whither art thou climbing? Is it to tracks unknown, to lands untrodden? No; it is to thine own yesterday. Never canst

thou know what thou art to-day until thou hast reached to-morrow. In the hours of thy sin there is a voice of thy God speaking ; but it reaches not thine ear. It is saying to thee, "Thou art wrong!"—"Thou art erring!"—"Thou art wandering from the way!"—but in that hour it is not heard by thee. Thou shalt hear it when the hour is past. Thou shalt hear it when thou hast bid thy sin good-bye. Thou shalt hear it when thou hast left the valley behind and art climbing the mount of holiness. In that higher moment the thunder will roll and the lightning gleam and the terrors of Sinai be revealed. To-day will speak to thee when it has become yesterday. When thou hearest that voice, be not dismayed by its roughness ! Remember, it is thy *purified* ear that hears it. It speaks to thy new self, to thy better self. It is a thunder which says, "This is my beloved son." It is a noise that is audible because of thy calm. It is a speck that is visible because of thy clearness. It is a pain that is experienced because of thy quickened body. The remorse of conscience is a voice "*behind* thee."

THE CURE WHICH WAS ONLY PARTIAL.

"The blind man looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands upon his eyes ; and he saw every man clearly."—MARK VIII. 24, 25.

AND so Christ made an abortive effort ! Surely this is a startling supposition ! Why should the first experiment have failed of full success, have revealed only "men like trees, walking" ! I could understand a *human* operator falling short of perfection in his first attempt, but not Jesus. Why should not His mandate, "Let there be light !" have been followed by an instantaneous clearness of vision ? Because an instantaneous clearness was not desirable. Christ's imperfect cure was not a failure ; it was part of the plan. If I could restore the sight of a blind man, I would, in his interest, do it at the evening

time. I should fear the effect of an immediate transition from dense darkness to full light. Too much light may have the same effect as too little ; it may unfit the eye for its environment. This restraint of revelation on Christ's part was an exceeding kindness. Nowhere in this act did His love shine so conspicuously as in the *moderation* of His power. He felt that for this man the light must come at evening time. Daylight would appal him, overwhelm him, paralyse him—would undo the cure at the moment of its accomplishment. There must for him be a twilight experience. The angel of light must descend at the *setting* of the sun. Not in full-orbed splendour must the vision burst upon his view, but slowly, gently, step by step, till the eye has been trained to its surroundings, and the heart has been acclimatised to the new glory.

Even so, O Lord, Thou openest the eye of my *spirit* ! Thou hast not granted me a revelation of the full-orbed glory. Thou hast unveiled my sight only at the setting sun ; Thou hast said, "At the *evening-time* there shall be light !" I thank Thee for this first imperfect vision. The full day would be too

much for me. Thou hast many things to tell me which I could not bear as yet. How many things which, in manhood, are my glory would, in youth, have been my sorrow ! I bless Thee that Thou hast trained me by twilight. If I saw the sudden splendour of the meridian sun, I might cry out with horror. Thine ideal of heaven might not yet be *mine*. Mine may be still a *Mohammedan* paradise. I may not be ready to see the Cross in the midst of Thy streets of gold. I may not be ready to behold the Lamb of sacrifice in the midst of the sapphire throne. I may not be ready to accept the servant's form as the climax of heavenly glory. Therefore I am glad that so *softly* Thou art lifting the veil. I am glad that to me the evening has come before the morning. I am glad that the first opening of the eyes has been so partial, so incomplete. I am glad that from the summit of my Pisgah I have not a *full* vision of the promised land. I thank Thee, O Lord, for the mist upon the hill.

THE GLORY OF CANA'S MIRACLE.

"Jesus saith unto her, Mine hour is not yet come. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory."—JOHN II. 4 and 11.

How shall we reconcile these statements! Jesus felt that His hour in Cana was beneath His destiny—that He had come into the world for a higher end; and yet it is declared that the miracle manifested His glory. How explain this discrepancy! There is no discrepancy, there is a beautiful harmony. The hour was certainly inadequate to express Christ's glory. He had a far bigger work to do than the satisfying of a festive moment—a larger mission than the brightening of a social throng. But do you not see that this stooping beneath His own glory is the very thing that makes Him glorious. The miracle of Cana was a *sacrifice* on the part of Jesus.

It was a diversion from the main line. It drew Him out of His road. It engaged His great powers on an obscure work—a deed of simple domestic kindness whose range would be very limited, and which the outside world would never see. To pass from His own great hour into that trivial hour, to bend from the mountain to the valley, to interest Himself in what was interesting only to another—this was a sacrifice. And the sacrifice was the glory. “He pleased not Himself.” His eye was on the height, but He averted it to the plain. He put Himself in the place of those who had nothing in common with Him. He tried to figure the world, not as *He* saw it, but as *I* see it. He looked at the deficiency of wine from my point of view. The power to do *this* was the real miracle; it was this that manifested His glory.

Lord of the marriage feast, grant *me* this power! I have often reached great unselfishness in a cause dear to my own heart; I have toiled for it without murmuring. But if an interruption came, if another asked me to help *outside* my own mission, I have met the request with impatience. I need an hour

of Cana—an hour of Thy marriage feast. I deem my own mission to be the *wine* of life, my brother's mission to be only the water. Help me to see the water as wine! Help me to live for one moment in my brother's soul! Help me for one hour to measure the things of life with *his* eyes! Doubtless I have far surpassed the marriage feast of Cana; I have left it out of sight behind. But give me a microscope by which I may see it again! Give me the microscope of sympathy! Put me in that light where my brother's little things will be magnified! Show me that Cana is still to him as large as Jerusalem is now to me! Remind me that yesterday Cana was as large to me as it now is to him! Send me back to my yesterday! Send me back to my surmounted hour! Send me back to the days when I spoke as a child, understood as a child, thought as a child! Send me back to the toys I have broken, to the pleasures I have outgrown, to the occupations I have become weary of; let them all live again in the interest for another! I may retrace the steps of my onward march; but the hour of retracement will be an hour of glory.

THE SECRET OF GOOD HEALTH.

“I wish, above all things, that thou mayest be in health as thy soul prospereth.”—JOHN III. 2.

THERE is a very strong connection between the health of the body and the health of the soul. One side of the connection is universally recognised; we all feel that the body has an influence on the *mind*. But we are less prone to recognise the other side—that the mind has an influence on the health of the body. Yet it is this latter connection that St. John specially emphasizes. He would seem to suggest that the larger number of our physical troubles have their root in something mental, just as the larger number of our mental troubles have their root in something physical. I believe he is right in this. I think that the majority of outward ailments originate in the thoughts.

How did you catch cold yesterday? "By standing in a draught," you say. But you stood in the same draught the day before and got no hurt. "Ah, but," you say, "I was *predisposed* to cold yesterday; before coming out I got a letter which chilled me." There it is! the draught came not from the street corner, but from the anxious moment. There are times when we can pass through the fiery furnace, unharmed — it is in moments of mental enthusiasm. Men tell us that the dread of the pestilence exposes us to its contagion. Why? Because fear is the mind's paralysis. You would be equally liable to that pestilence if you were in dread of a different one. If there is a cloud over the mind, it can rest on one valley as easily as on another. The dread of life is as liable to the pestilence as the dread of death. If I would pass scathless by, I must pass by on the uplands. I must be free, not from any special fear, but from fear itself.

Lord, let me take *Thy* prescription for perpetual youth! I desire to have the eye undimmed and the natural strength unabated;

place me on Mount Nebo, show me the Promised Land! Often have I thought of Thy words, "Hast thou *faith* to be healed?" Human physicians would have said, "The body first and the mind afterwards." Not so Thou. To Thee the root of the body's cure is the spirit's wing. Thou takest the invalid to the *Mount* before Thou healest him. Take *me* to the Mount, O Lord! I have long outward marches to make; how shall I prepare for them? Shall I practise the movement of the feet? Shall I inure myself to fatigue by long stretches of walking? Nay, that is not Thy method for me. Not by my walking, but by my flying, wilt Thou prepare me—not by the body's labour, but by the spirit's song. Thou art calling my soul to the hills, my heart to the home of the morning. If my heart is on the hill, my feet will not slide in the valley; if my soul is in the song, my body will not bend to the dust. Give me the lark before the labour, the mount before the mire, the joy before the jostling, the wing before the winter, the clarion before the cloud! The secret of my health will be the prospering of my soul.

THE COMFORT IN DIVINE RETRIBUTION.

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”—AMOS III. 2.

THIS is to my mind, the most un-Jewish utterance in the whole course of the Old Testament. It is like a summer day shining in the heart of winter. I am told that to shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem the sun shone out at midnight. So is it here. We have an anticipation of the day in the midst of night ; the lark sings at evening. The common opinion of the world previous to Christ is that punishment is a mark of alienation from Divine love. Here it is said to be the contrary. It is indicated that if the family of Israel had been less dear to God it would have received less chastisement.

God chastises the children of Israel because He knows them—knows that they are worth chastising. His infliction of punishment is, in fact, rather prospective than retrospective. It points not so much back to the expiation of a past deed as forward to the realising of a future glory. “Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”—the pruning of the vine is more for the sake of to-morrow than for the sake of yesterday. The keynote of dawning Christianity is the keynote of modern jurisprudence—punishment for the sake of reformation. Nothing proves your immortality like your retributions. It would not be worth while to punish a dying man. If you knew that your enemy would be dead in a week I feel sure you would let him go in peace. So would your Father do with you if you were not an immortal; He would let you sing in the sunshine after you have waked the storm. It is because you are an immortal that He will not let you go. It is because you have eternity in your heart that He exacts from you the tribute of the hour.

My soul, faint not when thou art rebuked

of thy Father!—it proves thine immortality. Even the rewards of thy Father do not prove thine immortality like His penalties. It is natural to speak kindly to a dying man. If thy days were to be few thou wouldst have more sun, less cloud. It is because thy days are to be long in the land that there are given thee so many commandments, so many penalties for breaking them. Sometimes thy penalty exceeds thy sin. It is because thy penalty is not meant for thy sin so much as for *thee*. Less would suffice to cleanse thy *past*; but it is thy future that must be cleansed. Thy pain is sent for to-morrow, not for yesterday. God told Cain that the mark He had set upon him would keep him from being killed. So is it with the mark on thy conscience—the wound called remorse. It is thy Father's sign of thine immortality. No *perishable* life could have shown such a wound. It is too big to be inflicted for the sake of time. It is the imprint of thine eternity. It is the scar that tells, not of death, but of deathlessness. It is that print of the nails which attests thy resurrection life. Faint not beneath thy pain, O my soul!

THE FIRST HEREDITARY TRANSMISSION.

“Cain was of that wicked one ; his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”—1 JOHN III. 12.

Cain and Abel illustrate the first operation of the law of heredity. The two brothers represent the men of the second generation. They are described as the first children of fallen humanity, and as born after its fall. In these circumstances we should expect both to be bad. But they are not ; one is bad and the other is good. Why is this ? The parents are both fallen—equally fallen. Where does Abel come from ? We have no difficulty with the pedigree of Cain. He is the fruit proper to the tree—the fruit of sin. But what is Abel’s pedigree ? He cannot be the fruit of sin ; he is righteous, holy. Where did he get his holiness ? Is he not a violation of that

principle by which like produces like? No: the old narrative is beautifully consistent. You forget that according to the story, the parents had lived in two worlds—heaven and earth. Before they tasted the tree of sin they had gazed on the tree of life. And because they had lived in two worlds they transmitted two worlds; they transmitted earth to Cain, heaven to Abel. They transmitted heaven though they had lost it, forgotten it. We transmit a thousand things which we have lost and forgotten; and, thank God, they are not all bad! A man may live well for years, and then forget all his virtues; Nero did. Yet the good years will not count for nothing with his posterity, even though that posterity should have come after his forgetfulness. There will be Abels among them—men of the first tree, the good tree. If Adam has ever been in Eden his progeny will reap the fruit of it though they be born long after the cherubim and the flaming sword have barred the way to the tree of life.

My soul, I have heard thy complainings; I have heard thee murmuring against the cruelty of thine environment. I have heard

thee say, "Am I not a child of Adam and have I not received from Adam a fallen nature?" Yes, and an unfallen nature, too. Never forget in thy complainings that thou art the heir to two worlds—not one! Doubtless there has been transmitted to thee the life of the sinful Cain—but not that alone. Abel also has come down to thee—the life of Paradise is in thy blood. Not alone the sweat of the brow is thy heritage; not alone the degradation of the dark is thy portion. One half thy heredity is from Eden. Thine eye has been kindled by the ancestral gaze at the tree of life. Thine ear has been tuned by the ancestral hearing of the Voice in the garden. Thy taste has been ennobled by the ancestral sight of the rivers of Paradise. Thy sense of God has been quickened by the ancestral communings with Nature in the cool of the day. Thy friendships have been deepened by the ancestral marriage tie. Thy hope has been helped to soar by the ancestral listening to the Sabbath bells. The image of thy God was *born* with thee; it was only broken by an accident. Why should the accident be more transmittable than the germ!

THE CURE OF MORAL IGNORANCE.

“The heavens declare the glory of God. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. Who can understand his errors?”—PSALM XIX. 1, 2, 12.

WHAT a strange assertion, of knowledge on the one hand and of ignorance on the other! Here is a claim to knowledge in a sphere where we should expect a confession of mystery; here is a confession of mystery in a region where we should look for perfect light! The Psalmist declares that he understands the *heavens*, but he says that he does not perceive the errors of his own soul! He has daily and nightly converse with the stars, but he hears not the voice of his own sin! Yet the stars are far away; his sin is at the door. Why should the revelation of God's majesty precede the revelation of the disorder within himself? Why should a man be able to learn

astronomy before he can learn the pervading sinfulness of his heart? It is because the vision of beauty must precede the vision of deformity. How do I learn what disorder is? It is by first learning order. I cannot know discord till I have studied harmony. No man is driven to the songs of heaven by the discordant notes of earth; he discerns the jarring notes of earth by hearing the songs of heaven. He that is born sightless cannot figure the sun, but he that can figure the sun can understand him who is born sightless. I learn my errors — my wanderings from the way, by learning that there *is* a way. When I find that there is an orbit for the life of every star, I see that *my* life has *wandered*.

O Lord, teach me my errors! Thou alone canst give me that knowledge. No amount of sin can do it, no contact with Satan can do it; it can only come from contact with Thee. My sight will never be offended when it meets unlovely things unless it has seen Thy beauty. Mine ear will never be fretted when it meets disharmony until it hears Thy music. Not by contemplating how badly my work is done shall I understand my errors.

I must contemplate a perfect work. Therefore it is that before all things Thou hast said, "Come unto Me." Thou hast not said, "Go and study your miserable workmanship; go and see how poor it looks in retrospect." No, Thou hast called me to contemplate the *highest* model—the work without a flaw. Thou hast led me first, not into the gallery of earth, but into the gallery of heaven. Thou hast fixed my earliest gaze on the perfect picture—on the supreme beauty. Instead of leading me through the miry clay, Thou hast led me through the green pastures and by the quiet waters. Thou hast made my first walk a walk round about Jerusalem. Not by the narrowness of lane and alley hast Thou taught me my limits. Thou hast showed me Thy spacious palaces—Thy house with many mansions. Thou hast made my morning view a view of the city of gold; therefore it is that at midday I have recognised my brass. I can only understand my errors by the light of heaven.

THE TESTED REFUGE.

“The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble ; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.”—PSALM XX. I.

“THE name of the God of Jacob” ! I thought that was the very thing which was not *revealed* ! I thought the angel that struggled with Jacob *refused* to give his name ! Yes, but he gave his blessing. He left behind him something by which he could be distinguished from all other presences—something which marked out his identity from all beside. It is this, I think, which the Psalmist here takes hold of. I understand him to mean : “May your religious refuge in trouble be no party cry, no special Church, no sectarian name ! May it be precisely that which you cannot name, which you can only feel ! May your name for God be ‘the God of Jacob’—the God who

in the struggle of a human soul sent a blessing *through* the pain—the God who gave power through a shrunk sinew and strength by halting on the thigh!” That is what I take the Psalmist to mean. And truly it is the only kind of refuge that will do for a “day of trouble”—for the time when the trouble remains. It is only the God of Jacob that gives strength *in* trouble. The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac give strength by taking trouble away—Abraham gets back his son, Isaac renews his wells. But the blessing of Jacob comes in his calamity—comes by the very touch that lames him. The struggle itself is his blessing—not the cessation of the struggle. The angel that wrestles with him is, in the very act of wrestling, a herald of the dawn. The day is breaking just where Jacob’s heart is breaking. His is a refuge, not *from* the flood, but *in* the flood. All former men are saved by rescue: Enoch escapes death, Noah survives the waters. But Jacob is saved *in* the waters; he is supported in the *midst* of the storm; he ascends through the medium of his chariot of fire.

May the God of Jacob be *my* refuge! The angel I need is a strengthening angel—my

Lord's Gethsemane angel. It is not often *now* that an angel rolls away the actual stone; the calamities of life are not, in *my* day, miraculously lifted. But still there remains a defence for me—the name of the God of Jacob. The strength of Gethsemane is not dead. The place where Jacob stood, the place where Jesus stood, is waiting for me still. Still can I find the nameless strength, the incomprehensible peace. Still can I drain the cup and not faint; still can I bear the cross and not die. I cannot say that my Father will avert the cup; I cannot say that my Father will remove the cup; but I can always say that my Father will make the cup tolerable. Not always can I repair to the God of Abraham—ask exemption from the wood and the fire. But ever can I repair to the God of Jacob. Ever can I ask a voice from the burning bush—the voice that forbids it to be consumed. Ever can I claim the peace *in* pain, the rest *in* wrestling, the calm *in* conflict. Ever can I expect the bow in the *midst* of the cloud, the bread in the *depth* of the desert, the garden by the *side* of the tombstone. These are the miracles of the God of Jacob.

THE FIRST CHARTER OF WOMANHOOD.

“The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs; and the rib made He a woman. And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.’—GENESIS II. 21-23.

WHERE did this scene occur? In the outer world? I do not think the narrative wishes us to take that view. I understand the writer to say that Adam had a dream. The word here rendered “a deep sleep” elsewhere means “a vision of the night.” I would paraphrase the narrative thus: “Adam slept; and as he slept, God caused a vision of the night to pass before him. In that vision it seemed to him as if a rib were taken from his body by the hand of the Lord. And as he looked at the separated member, it appeared to take form and grow, until it assumed a

shape of great beauty. And as he looked at that form, lo! it was the very woman who had been by his side from the beginning, but whom he had hitherto despised! And Adam said, From this time forth I will despise her no more; I will give her the dignity I have denied her; she is now, from this time forth, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Such I take to be the narrative. It is not, as people think, an account of woman's *creation*. It is rather the first record of her marriage—the earliest assertion of her equality with man. This is not the day of her birth; it is the day of her nuptials—the hour when man recognised her to be a part of his own life and a sharer of his own fortunes.

I thank Thee, O Father, for this first dream of the human heart! Thou trainest the heart by its dreams as much as by its actions. I thank Thee that its first dream was a dream of chivalry. I bless Thee that the primitive thought of man's fancy was, not the river of Paradise, not the trees of the garden, not even the birds of the air—lofty though be their flight, but the love of home and the

home of love. I praise Thy name that the earliest imaginings saw woman as the equal, not the slave. In sleep or waking Thou hast sent no lovelier vision to the soul. Not a bower of Eden has so green a memory as that oldest dream. It is the only leaf which we have carried unsullied from Thy garden. It has consecrated our hearth; it has wreathed our domestic altar; it has beautified our home; it has hallowed our family tree; it has made our fireside; it has enthroned motherhood; it has softened society; it has bettered morals. Send forth that dream again, O Lord! Send it into every forest primeval, into every heart of uncultured man! Send it wherever the male claims monopoly! Let it break the power of the zenanas; let it repeal the caste of the Brahman; let it purify the paradise of the Mohammedan! Nay, send it nearer home—nearer ourselves! Lead it to the man amongst us who forgets his manhood—whose hand is raised to strike the weaker frame! Our vaunted culture has not outgrown Thy primitive Eden; quicken us anew by man's first dream!

THE CONVICTION OF SIN.

“The lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” — REVELATION V. 5.

A LION strong enough to *open a book*! That is surely an anti-climax! We could understand a lion strong enough to rule a forest. We could understand a lion strong enough to rend its prey. But to open a book—that is surely a very easy thing! No, not *this* book. This book has seven seals, and to open it we need the courage of a lion. For, what *is* this sealed writing? It is the moral consciousness of man. To open the book is to tell me that I am a sinner. The man who tells me that is in great personal danger. You may accuse me of total depravity when you speak from the pulpit, because you there include everybody else in the accusation. But if you boldly turn to my corner and say, “Here is a man

who has not been exactly upright in all his dealings," you must have a lion heart indeed ! I am certain to arraign you, to impeach you, to charge you with becoming personal. That was where Jesus met His danger, met His death ; He opened the book of each individual heart. He did not merely say, "You are all sinners," that would not have lost His audience half an hour's sleep ! He made every one feel "He means *me* !" He made Judas the apostle wince. He made Simon the Pharisee cower. He made Pilate the governor uncomfortable. He made everyone say, "This is personal !" And how did He do it ? By speaking ? Oh, no—by *being*. Why has nobody opened the book but Jesus ? Simply because nobody has been pure but Jesus. You will never tell me my sins by pointing to them ; you must point away from them. Would you teach me my avarice ; you must show me generosity. Would you teach me my deceit ; you must reveal truthfulness. Would you teach me the folly of my pride ; you must display the dignity of being humble. No man can see the brass till his eye has rested on the gold.

Son of Man, I come to Thee to get the book

of my heart opened; what was once Thine offence is now Thy glory. It is only by coming to Thee that I shall learn my sin. I have heard men say that before I come I must feel my need of Thee. Nay, it is the opposite; ere I can feel my need of Thee I must come. Thou alone canst open the book. It is only from the interior of the palace that I can see the miry clay of the road outside. I cannot know *myself* until I have known *Thee*. Whence has Magdalene derived the mirror of herself? From the scenes of the street? From the sight of her moral equals? From viewing those who have descended deeper still? Nay; it is from a gaze on *Thee*. It is in Thy face she first sees her own. Thy purity is the mirror of her impurity. She never sees her deformity till she beholds Thy beauty. She never knows her discord till she hears Thy music. She never discerns her clouds till she catches Thy sunshine. She never feels her burden till she finds the support of Thine arm. She never experiences the pains of hell till she looks on the joys of Thy heaven. Only by Thy light of holiness can I read the tragedy of my book of life.

THE CHARM OF TRANQUILLITY.

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet.”—PSALM CVII. 29, 30.

I TAKE the idea to be that the gladness of quiet is only felt *after* the storm, “*Then* are they glad.” Men become glad of the quiet hour after they have heard the roaring of the tempest. The stillness *before* the storm does not make us glad. There *is* a stillness before the storm. There is a state called innocence. It is Adam in the rustic village—Adam amid the trees of the garden. I was quiet there; but I had no sense of quietude, no gladness in being quiet. How could I, when I knew not the meaning of noise? I heard not the moaning of the great sea. I heard not the lashing of the waves upon the world’s shore. I had no trembling; but I had as little trans-

port. The stillness of the night can bring no joy to the deaf-born. Why can it bring them no joy? Because it has never been broken. They have nothing to contrast it with. They have never heard the storm; therefore they cannot know the stillness. So was it with me in the Garden. But one day I strayed out beyond the gate and lost my way. And, as I wandered, I became weary and hungry and cold. Then, for the first time, the Garden was revealed. I said, "The Lord was in that place, and I knew it not; how glad I should be to get back there!" I learned the stillness by the storm; I saw the glory by the gloom; I beheld the flowers of Paradise by the experience of Paradise lost.

My soul, hast thou considered the secret of thy rest! Hast thou considered why the Prince of Peace began by walking on the sea! It is because thy peace *needs* the sea. An unbroken calm could never have been a conscious calm—a calm to make thee glad. Thy bow demands the memory of a cloud. Only when Christ opened thine ear to the *storm* did He open thine ear to the stillness. It is not enough that quietness should *reign*;

if thou art to be at rest, thou must *hear* that quietness. It must come to thee as a *hiding-place* from the wind, as a *covert* from the tempest. The charm of thy quiet hours is the remembrance of thy restless moments. Wouldst thou eliminate the cloud, then dost thou destroy the bow. Bless thy Father for the storm of yesterday! it has revealed to thee the calmness of to-day. It has made the silence a joy to thee. The peace of the still night is to thine opened ear no longer what it was to the deaf mute. To him it was a negation, a blank, a nothingness. To thee it is a possession, a power, a vocal presence—something to hear, to feel, to commune with. What has made the difference? It is the wings of the wind; it is the voice of the storm. It is through the swelling sea the Father has led thee to the haven; bless the swelling sea, O my soul!

THE PRIMAL THING WHICH SHOULD BE PERMANENT.

“Thou hast left thy first love.”—REVELATION II. 4.

THERE are three sets of men who may be said to be under a cloud—the sceptic, the pessimist and the cynic. I should say they represent respectively the clouds over faith, hope and love. Scepticism is the cloud over faith; pessimism is the cloud over hope; cynicism is the cloud over love. Now, of these three, the greatest cloud is the last. It is a sad thing when a man is compelled to say, “There is no ground for religious *belief*.” It is a sad thing when he is compelled to say, “There is no ground for human *hope*.” But the saddest of all things is when he is compelled to say, “There is no ground for

brotherly *love*." There was a time when this order of comparison would have been greeted as the wildest of paradoxes. There are ages known to history as "the ages of faith." This means that in those days there was no sin deemed so bad as the sin of being a sceptic. In our day the greatest of all sins is deemed the sin against love. And I feel sure that this latest judgment by earth is the permanent judgment in heaven. There is no cloud deplored like the cloud over my love—over my power of loving. The Church has often lamented "advanced views." What my Father laments is my contracted views—the contraction of my heart. An eclipse of faith may come from larger light; an eclipse of hope may come from transcending my environment; but an eclipse of love means a spiritual decline. My Father fears when I enter into *this* cloud.

My soul, leave not thy first love! I will not say, leave not thy first faith! The first faith is not always the best; thy thought of the Father may be purified by the fire through which it passes. I will not say, leave not thy

first hope! The first hope is not always the best; thine earliest dream of Paradise may be a selfish dream. It is written, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail." Our first prophetic hopes generally do fail; the man would scorn the ideals of his childhood. But thy first love, thy morning love, that ought not to die! I would have no cloud to come over the vision of thy *heart*. If thou wilt keep *that* vision clear, there will be no *want* to thee. There may be starless nights to the eye of intellect; the old tongues may cease in which faith once expressed itself. There may be starless nights to the eye of fancy; the old prophecies may fail in which hope once delighted. But, if thy *love* remain, the eye of the *heart* will not be starless. The heart can see in places where the reason has lost its sight, where the fancy has become blind. Destroy these temples, and in three days love shall raise them again! It will give thee back thy faith; love believeth all things. It will give thee back thy prophecy; love hopeth all things. It will give thee better than either faith or prophecy—power to wait with-

out them ; love endureth all things. Never let out the fire of the heart ! Though nerve be low, though sense be feeble, though judgment be groping, though fancy's wing be weary, yea, though virtue itself be erring, keep that fire ever burning, and all the rest shall be added unto thee. Leave not thy first love, O my soul !

THE RETICENCE OF THE BIBLE.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." — I JOHN
III. 2.

WHAT singular modesty on the part of an inspired man—of a man who lay on the very bosom of the Lord! "It doth not yet appear." I should have expected such a man to say: "It all appears to me very clearly; I have a revelation from the Holy One which is denied to common men." *Mohammed* said that; he gave a detailed description of heaven. *Hundreds* of visionaries have said that; they have seen the curtain lifted and the mysteries of God revealed. But the man who was nearer than all others to the Source of eternal life is content to say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"! I think this is a typical silence—typical of the whole Bible. Men often say that the evidence of the Bible is the

things it tells us. Doubtless that is one evidence. But I have often thought there is another—the things it does not tell us. The speech of the Bible may be golden, but its silence is at least silver. Many a book professing to bring tidings from God would have mistaken imaginings for realities, would have published the dreams of the heart as the very descriptions of heaven. The Bible commits no such mistake. Its reticence is sublime—as sublime as that of the starry sky. Enoch speaks not in his translation moment. Elijah speaks not in his chariot of fire. Lazarus speaks not in his hour of resurrection. The child of Jairus speaks not on her bed of revival. The youth of Nain speaks not from his arrested bier. Moses alone does speak from beyond the grave; but it is not of the things beyond; it is of the things “to be accomplished at Jerusalem.”

I thank Thee, O my Father, that the glory beyond does not appear. If it did I do not see how I could remain here, and live. I think a sight of Thy glory would paralyse me for earthly work. If my earthly work were done I should desire, I should require, a sight

of Thy glory. But it is not done; I have my task to finish. And, having my task to finish, I am afraid of any message that would divert me from my task. I am afraid to get a sight of the streets paved with gold. I am afraid to catch a strain of the harps on the glassy sea. I am afraid to receive a breath of that air which brings no hunger, no cold, no oppression, no dying. I am afraid to get a sense of the littleness of time, of the smallness of the things for which men fret and strive. For I have still to transact these little things—still to frequent the exchange, still to seek the market-place, still to apply for the appointment, still to agitate for the movement of the hour. I should not like these things to be too much overshadowed; I should not like to see their nothingness in the light of the world to come. Therefore, my Father, I bless Thee for the cloud; I praise Thee for the mist on the hill; I thank Thee that what I *shall* be does not yet appear.

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